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ECONOMIC SURVIVAL STRATEGIES OF FEMALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS: THE CASE OF SOWETO, SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

South African researchers' legitimate preoccupation with political and market concerns has, in the past, resulted in much less attention being paid to gender dynamics in South Africa. Where gender inequality has been targeted as an issue, studies have largely located their arguments within public debates of the polity and the economy. Studies seeking to understand the intra-household dynamics of gender relations are still rare in South Africa, so that the lives of those women and men who are neither part of the open labour market, nor the frontline political agenda still remain invisible and silent. This study seeks to contribute to the on-going gender debate in South Africa by concentrating on the intra-household dynamics of gender, and how its articulation with the public domain impacts on the position of women.
The research examines various aspects of the economic survival strategies of households headed by women in Orlando East, Soweto. In particular, it investigates the socio-economic value of women's unpaid labour; the value of non-market transfers for the survival of poor households; the significance of household structure for household welfare and survival; and the link between formal education and informal income earning opportunities.

The study revealed a strong relationship between economic problems and breakdown of urban African families. Economic and social policy, and societal beliefs, have so far failed to consider and acknowledge the changing roles of women who are increasingly being forced into the status of household headship, in the context of worsening urban livelihoods. The major social policy implication arising from the study is that low-income African women, in particular, should be targeted as a priority group by researchers. Women heads of households, many of whom have no security of income, are particularly vulnerable because they have to provide primarily for their households. It is suggested that policy-oriented research should analyze, first and foremost, intra-household dynamics along gender lines to unveil the unequal distribution of welfare and opportunity, and women's relative discrimination within the home. The study also revealed serious limitations with the data base on the position and status of women in South Africa. A need for more research with a progressive edge is therefore stressed.

It is believed that the political climate provided by the recent democratization of government in South Africa, provides a conducive context within which the contents of the women's constitution could be transformed into specific programmes and projects focusing on low-income women and women heads of households.

The major contribution of this study has been its shift of emphasis of the gender debate in South Africa away from explicit political and shop-floor issues, to household and neighbourhood level strategies, while emphasising the relevance of these experiences to the functioning of the more visible institutions such as the economy and the polity.

Key Words: South Africa, Soweto, gender, urban poverty, female-headed households, survival strategies

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: RATIONALE, OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

1.0 Introduction

The 1980's saw an upsurge of research focused on women in Third World cities. While most of the work undertaken prior to the mid-1980's was focused on women and gender issues in rural areas, the bulk of literature that emerged later concentrated on research that either targeted both the urban and the rural setting, or which concentrated specifically on analysing women and gender issues in cities. This shift can be attributed to a realization of wide-scale and sustained urbanisation of Third World populations in general, as well as city-ward female migration and the increasing tendency of women to remain in cities on a long-term or permanent basis.

In South Africa, however, gender-focused literature in the urban sector has not been as robust and vigorous, considering that accelerated urbanisation of women has been a phenomenon there for some time now (Beavon and Rogerson, 1982). South African geographers in particular, have been conspicuous in their neglect of studying cities in their gendered nature (Friedman and Wilkes, 1986; Robinson, 1992).

It has been argued that a relative neglect of a gender dimension in South African geography is mainly a reflection of the nature of the publishing community of geographers which is largely racist and male-dominated (Robinson, 1992). In their

review of South African geographical writings, Friedman and Wilkes (1986) note that a number of inherently gendered processes such as migrant labour, housing provision, urban informal sector, and industrialization, etc., have all been studied by South African geographers, but in a gender-blind manner. Friedman (1987) urges South African geographers to recognise the gendered nature of South African cities in their writings, and adds that they should regard gender as an independent area of study alongside such issues as racial domination and capitalist exploitation (Friedman, 1987).

Furthermore, it is generally agreed that in South Africa gender subordination within the household needs to be tackled as an issue in its own right (Campbell, 1990; Horn, 1991; White, 1991; Robinson, 1992). Robinson (ibid) highlights the important role which could be played by South African geographers in the study of intra-household dynamics to better inform gender-aware policies. She states:

> ".... insofar as variations in gendered power relations are spatially expressed ...., geographies of gender relations and accounts of local shaping of gender relations need to be explored. This would provide a great deal of insight into the variability of gender relations over time and space, and also begin to suggest how policies concerned to redress women's subordinate position might need to be sensitive to these variations." (Robinson, 1992, p.130)

Despite the concerted calls, studies considering the gendered nature of urban development are still scarce in South Africa. It is to this void that this thesis generally addresses itself.

In other regions which are rapidly urbanising much has been written about gender issues within the urban setting. In Africa this is less the case because the majority of

African communities are farming communities, and as such most literature concentrates on rural households and agrarian issues. In South Africa urban gender issues tend to be overshadowed by more topical debates relating to either shop floor dynamics or national liberation. In other words, even those who have bothered to speak up on women and gender issues, view these not in their own right, but as part of the struggle against the oppression of the African and black people in general. Speaking for the ANC Women's Secretariat in 1979, Mavis Nhlapho articulated that:

> "In our society women have made a call for the recognition of their rights as women, but always put the aspirations of the whole African and other oppressed people of our country first" (Kimble and Unterhalter, 1982, p.13)

Another ANC activist, while recognising the need for a specific focus on women's struggles, has said:

> "Women's liberation in South Africa cannot be achieved outside of the context of the liberation struggle" (Ginwala, 1986, p.13).

While I agree that women and gender issues need to be located within the broader context of the liberation struggle, the autonomous impact of gender in shaping social relations should be recognised. This is also borne out by evidence that in those southern African countries which are now independent, national independence did not automatically entail women's emancipation (Bazilli, 1991; Horn, 1991).

In low income urban households what is known as "women's work" entails not merely reproductive work but also the productive roles of women as secondary (and now increasingly primary) income earners. In South Africa this usually takes the form of women's involvement in the informal economy or in piece-rate work (Beavon and Rogerson, 1982; Nattrass, 1984). Over and above their reproductive and productive roles women are involved in community-managing work at a local community level

where they often take responsibility for the allocation of scarce resources to ensure the survival of their households (Moser and Levy, 1986). The multiple roles of women from poorer households have long challenged the belief that within the household there is a distinct sexual division of labour where a woman plays the role of household manager and organiser, and the man is the material provider (Meer, 1990).

The study as a whole is informed by the feminist paradigm which takes the standpoint that women are an oppressed category, and that the cornerstone of the social construction of reality is patriarchal notions of society (see also Bazilli, 1991). However, some scepticism about conventional feminist approaches is expressed in this thesis. This is mainly because the subjective experiences of people who are the target of this study force them to dissociate themselves from what they think feminism can achieve in the way of improving their lives. In short, the urgency and nature of "bread and butter" problems of poor African women seem to fall outside the parlance of conventional feminist language (Ramphele, 1989).

Feminism has further been criticised on the grounds that it often assumes a myth of sisterhood which frequently obscures the very significant differences among women of different classes, races, political ideologies, geographical locations, ethnicity, etc (Manicom, 1991; Fouche, 1994). Therefore in South Africa it is important to recognise and account for these differences. Failure to do so may mean that theories which emerge fail to account genuinely for the oppression of the majority of women. In a South African context part of the criticism has been that much of the present perspective of feminism was brought in by white academic feminists (Nkululeko,

1987).

Therefore an essential task of any feminist and/or gender-focused studies in South Africa is to validate and acknowledge differences among women who above all share experiences of subordination and discrimination at varying levels. The best way to achieve this goal is to empower the most oppressed African working class women to speak in their own voices. This is an argument developed in this study, and the sample population of the study, the major research themes, the methodology, tools and techniques have been determined by this consideration: to empower women to speak for themselves. Later in this chapter, in the context of discussion of fieldwork undertaken for this study, the challenge and the importance of oral history collection will be charted to demonstrate how this method helps to break "silences" among women.

1.1 Genesis of the Study

While the above considerations provide a theoretical and academic explanation for why the present research was undertaken, they do not fully explain a seeming obsession with a small group of women resident in an old township-cum-slum because of the ordinariness of these people. The greatest initial motivation to pursue this study is irreducibly personal, and therefore, a brief outline of my career background as a community worker among the people of Soweto will help to shed some light. On completing a social science degree in 1984 I worked for an NGO, Wits Mental Health Society in Soweto. In this capacity I worked in local schools as a member of a guidance team working with children with learning disabilities and their families.

After three years I worked as a co-ordinator of youth activities in Soweto. My main responsibilities here were development, implementation and evaluation of educational and cultural support programmes for children who were members of sixteen youth clubs run by Local Authorities. In both these positions, in which I was working with children from very poor backgrounds, I made three observations which were significant in shaping my views about gender, poverty, and development. First, all the slow learners and "problem" children came from very poor backgrounds. Second, the poorest among the poor children came from single-parent families, and virtually all these households were headed by women. Finally, a substantial number of households had no visible and/or reliable means of income.

From these observations developed an interest in issues relating to female household headship, urban poverty and survival strategies. In the face of acute deprivation these families still sent their children to school and they still had at least one meal per day. I thought it would be useful to investigate what goes on within such households. In particular I was interested in aspects such as the patterns of consumption within households, division of labour, distribution and control of resources, the effect of household composition on household survival, and most of all in how these were perceived by household members, particularly the heads of households. The specifications of my job could not sustain this need, and therefore I had to go back to study full-time what had become a private intellectual need.

Starting out with a Masters degree in Development Policy and Planning in the Third World, I became aware that the position of women in Third World cities, particularly

their household survival strategies, was less coherently researched amid what I otherwise thought was a robust wealth of literature on women and gender in general. Specifically, I noted that in South Africa most detailed research targeting women tended to concentrate more on women in the countryside (Letsoalo, 1982; Bozzoli, 1983; 1991; Bradford, 1987). The few gender studies which were city-based tended to concern themselves with labour, economic and political issues (Martin and Rogerson, 1984; Lawson, 1986; Budlender, 1991; Shefer; 1991) or to lump all women together into a single category, emphasising the general subordination of women as a result of the patriarchal tradition of South Africa which cuts across races and classes (Walker, 1990; Bazilli, 1990; Berger, 1992). A specific group of women, namely African female urban household heads still remain under-researched, and thus relatively "invisible" and "silent".

1.2 Study Goals and Assumptions

The overall goal of the study is to identify the major elements of economic survival strategies of poor urban female heads of households. A number of assumptions relating to this broader research goal were made so as to address the research questions in a structured fashion. My first assumption was that there is a greater concentration of women than men in the urban informal sector and in particular in a category termed petty-commodity production by those who write in the Marxist tradition (e.g. Nattrass, 1984). The study by Beavon and Rogerson (1982) established that only a small minority of women informal sector operators received incomes which were higher than those of their counterparts who are in paid formal employment. This finding is critical when one wishes to examine women's persistent concentration in

those categories of the sector which are least profitable. It is also justifiable to assume that women household heads with their already worse material base are the worst-off in the scale of all informal sector operators whether they are male or female (Beavon and Rogerson, 1982; Nattrass, 1984).

Second, in the face of acute deprivation and the unavailability of the *supportive*[1] extended family unit in the urban sector, the role played by inter-household non-market exchanges is viewed as critical for the survival of poor households headed by women. These often serve as some form of community-based support for township households whose incomes are low and/or seasonal.

The third assumption is that there could be a direct link between the level of education of householders and their ability to provide for sustenance of their households. Particularly it is believed that the level of skills has a direct bearing on how well household heads manage to look after their dependants single-handedly. It should be pointed out, however, that any amount of skill could be rendered meaningless if the market makes no demand for it.

1.3 Entering the Field

On beginning field research I experienced the kind of teething problems which are well documented in social science research textbooks (Burgess, 1991). But I also experienced many less documented advantages and disadvantages which are specific to researchers studying their own indigenous communities. On reaching Soweto I

[1] Extended families are a phenomenon in cities, but they seem to have broken down in terms of their traditional functions (see Chapter 6).

realised that I had taken for granted many aspects of this community as general knowledge. As the research period progressed I had to move very carefully and continuously try to guard against the danger of overlooking situations that at first appear all too familiar. Stephenson and Greer (1981) warn against this danger and advise researchers working within their own culture to "adopt an artificial naiveté" by recording as much detail as possible about the people present and topics of conversation regardless of their relevance. In these terms familiar concepts should be given "stranger value" and seen through the eyes of a stranger.

I made strenuous efforts to follow this advice while also exploiting the advantages associated with being an insider-researcher, and tried to ensure that I followed all the necessary steps that any other researcher would have followed. My first approach into the field research area and the community was made via the community workers attached to the Local Authority for which I had worked a few years before. They were helpful with suggestions of key people and organisations working on the ground who should know about my presence in the township as well as the nature and purpose of my study.

It is important to mention here that safety considerations while working in Soweto are paramount. Incidents of violent crimes directed at lone women drivers, researchers and journalists are rife in Soweto. I noted that unemployment and poverty had worsened over the past few years since I had last worked in Soweto. This, I believe, made people more desperate and therefore more prone to crime. Therefore despite my determination to conduct all my interviews personally and unaccompanied, I had to

use the services of an assistant, a local man, to escort me while conducting research. I felt especially vulnerable in the evenings and at weekends, since these are particularly unsafe periods in Orlando East[2].

It was helpful that I already knew a number of community leaders in Orlando East from my past work experience there. I was therefore spared the trouble of having to familiarise myself with small informal, and yet very influential community structures. But despite this familiarity with the townships, I still found it necessary to negotiate and re-negotiate my way at different levels throughout my field research period. Robert Burgess reports this to have been the case with his own research at Bishop McGregor School in Britain as he found that explaining his presence only to the few top people, "gatekeepers", was not enough, and he found that he had to rationalise his activities at many levels during the course of his research (Burgess, 1991, p.40-45).

I experienced some level of inner conflict in situations where I was forced to associate myself with community groups whose involvement and activities were only remotely linked to or totally unrelated to my particular project. For instance, I found that I had to attend long meetings and "people's courts"[3] run by the Orlando Civic Association. I was, however, careful not to be seen to be aligning myself with the Civic Association as I learned that not all groups in the community agreed with its style of

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[2] In Chapter 4 I explain why Orlando East was considered ideal for the study despite the adversities mentioned.

[3]These are sometimes called kangaroo courts. They are largely constituted by locally- or self-appointed civilians. Their rationale is that they deal with those community disputes which the legal structures have "failed" to handle to the satisfaction of the parties concerned.

leadership. I was also careful not to compromise my study goals by being too closely associated with one or other of the community groups.

Having established the necessary initial contacts with important organisations, such as the representatives of key political parties as well as street committees, I resolved to work as independently of these bodies as the situation permitted.

Another challenge came when I had to outline the purpose of my study to the potential respondents. Burgess (1991) rightly advises that at the beginning of their investigation researchers need to clarify their role and the context of their research. He further says that as the research develops and the role of the researcher changes, she has to adapt her account accordingly. Similarly, Finch (1984) advises that particular care must be taken by the researcher to follow the correct ethical procedures, to explain the purpose of the research explicitly, and to ensure that those researched understand their rights.

However, Burgess (1991) warns that informants should not be treated to a theoretical discourse, for experience points to hazards in presenting studies in these terms. Instead, it is suggested that specific attention should be drawn to the implications of your research for those affected by it (Burgess, ibid).

In my particular situation I was faced with something of an ethical dilemma. I had previously worked with members of this community as a community worker. Therefore my capacity was generally perceived to be that of a service giver. Some

people were keen to talk to me not because I was a researcher, but because I was seen as a person who had come to improve their community. This situation could have been easily exploited to ensure quick and enthusiastic responses, but I was very much aware of the extent to which this move could bias the study findings, particularly those aspects relating to the material wellbeing of households. People are given to under-reporting their incomes if they foresee the possibility of selection for some kind of income generation community project.

On the other hand it could have been disastrous for the study if people were to learn from other sources that I was only a researcher doing work in which they would not directly benefit. It was, however, pleasantly surprising that having been told the genuine purpose of my work, most respondents were still willing to take part in the study.

1.4 Research Themes, Sampling Procedures and Methodology

The major research questions reflect the themes which the study aimed to cover. These have subsequently been presented in this thesis in the form of various chapters each reporting the specific core findings of this research. In some of the chapters more than one theme is addressed.

The major questions of this research are as follows:

1. What are the causes of female-headed households in Soweto and in Orlando East?
2. To what extent does household structure influence the nature of survival of households headed by women?

3. How are women's positions within the household affected by the status of being household heads?

4. How do women who are not formally employed use their time, and how can or should this time be accounted for?

5. Of what importance are informal networks of reciprocity to the survival of poorer households headed by women, and what forms do these take?

6. How central is formal education to the performance of small informal sector enterprises operated by women?

More than one sampling method was used for this particular study. First, in order to find potential respondents simple random sampling was done. Orlando East was divided into three sections according to the phases in which it was erected. In the first round of interviews I selected the households randomly, making sure that the whole settlement was more or less equally covered. The questionnaire which was administered in this first round was short, lasting for approximately ten minutes (Appendix 1 [Preliminary interview schedule]). The main purpose of this questionnaire was to identify women which would be willing to be part of the study. These were identified not only by gender, but also by their functions within the home. Another purpose was to determine the nature of economic activities in which they were involved. This round of interviews enabled me therefore to delineate between titular and functional heads, and between informal sector operators and formally employed women heads.

Out of the 150 heads of households spoken to only 113 were suitable for my sample

population by their virtue of being[4]:

(i) of economically viable age (16-60 years, this being the official employment age for women in South Africa);

(ii) unemployed or not formally employed;

(iii) without any formal tertiary education (the underlying assumption here being that there is a direct link between the level of formal education and formal sector employability).

The two primary research methods employed in this study (and the rationale thereof) are explored below.

(i) Semi-structured interviews

Out of this group of 113 I ultimately interviewed fifty women chosen from the list through random sampling. These women were interviewed using semi-structured interview schedules, and the responses were recorded in writing and on tape during the course of the interview (Appendix 2 [Semi-structured interview schedule]). The semi-structured interviews were meant to collect statistical and demographic data, as well as to determine sources of income, expenditure patterns, dependency ratios, household form and composition (i.e. household structure), usage of time, participation in neighbourhood movements and importance of non-market exchanges.

With some households I found that it was almost impossible to get any useful information on sources and levels of incomes or patterns of expenditure. For these

[4] The 150 households in the preliminary sample do not include the male-headed households because once I had established that the household head was a man, no further questions were pursued

households a two-week long income/expenditure diary was designed so that they recorded their incomes and expenditures on a daily basis (Appendix 3 [Daily diary]). Daily contacts were maintained with households filling in diaries to ensure that incomes and expenditures were fully recorded. I found this to be a useful solution because even those households which had reported no incomes during interviews recorded some in their diaries. Half of the Orlando sample had to complement their questionnaire responses with these diaries.

The semi-structured questionnaires were further administered to a group of 20 women drawn randomly and through snowballing from Protea North, a comparatively new and up-market suburb of Soweto. This was done to monitor whether or not the trends observed from the above sample were determined by the socio-economic status of Orlando East women. Protea North data have been used selectively in this study to elaborate the findings of the main sample. It should be pointed out that this is not a comparative study of Orlando East and Protea. As such the daily diaries were not administered for the Protea sample because their income and expenditure are regular and predictable since they are all formally employed. Similarly, the oral history participants were not drawn from the Protea sample.

(ii) Life Histories

To complement the information gained from semi-structured interviews and secondary data, life histories were collected from twenty women selected from the sample of fifty (Appendix 4 [Oral Testimonies' blueprint]). These were mainly used for gathering data around such issues as:

- women's views on the causes of female household headship (which is evidently on the rise),

- perceptions of their roles and status in the household and the neighbourhood,

- the impact of socio-economic changes on household survival,

- distribution of welfare within the household, i.e. issues such as the household division of labour as well as access to and control of household resources, and

- their visions for the future (how could their positions change in the future).

The challenges and opportunities presented by oral history collection technique for this study are outlined in the next section. It is believed that the unique contribution to knowledge this study makes is mainly as a result of the depth and vitality of data generated by oral histories. I therefore explore the technique in depth.

1.5 Collecting Women's Oral Testimonies: Challenges and Opportunities

That oral histories are the most useful and flexible method of capturing women's experiences can no longer be disputed (Romero, 1988; Mirza and Strobel, 1989; Bozzoli, 1991; Wright, 1993). Oral histories afford a researcher a unique opportunity to gain insight into those aspects of women's lives which cannot be captured through the conduct of conventional methods of research. Anderson and Jack (1991) point out that oral histories are a treasure not only to the interviewer, but their spontaneity presents useful opportunities for the narrators as well. They note that:

> "For the narrator, the interview provides the opportunity *to tell her story in her own terms.* For researchers taped interviews *preserve a living interchange* for present and future use; we can rummage through interviews ..... probing, comparing, checking insights, finding new treasures ..... then arranging and carefully documenting our results."(Anderson and Jack, 1991, p.11) (my emphasis)

It is generally agreed that life histories are particularly valuable for uncovering women's perspectives because it has been observed that women's expression of their unique experiences as women are often muted particularly in those situations where women's interests and needs are at variance with those of men (Anderson and Jack, ibid). Also women may not be encouraged, within the context of a pre-planned structured interview, to express fully the views which are deemed to depart from publicly accepted perspectives. It is only through life history techniques that women can be afforded a chance to dig deeper into their experiences.

There are, however, as many obstacles as there are opportunities in the whole enterprise of life history collection. I will discuss here particularly those which I experienced while collecting oral histories for this study. I will also outline how these obstacles have been overcome in the process of transcribing and writing up oral histories in the text.

Obstacles resulting from the differences in culture (Robertson, 1983; Davison, 1989), language (Spradley, 1979; Robertson, ibid), and gender ((Oakley, 1981; Finch, 1984) between the researcher and the narrator are well documented. In my case I found that the connections relating to culture, language and gender made in the literature were only partially relevant because of my sharing the above attributes with the respondents (see also Miles, 1991). But there were some other obstacles (as well as opportunities) which were encountered mainly as a result of my being an insider-researcher. The existing literature, produced almost exclusively by western white middle class feminist researchers does not, in some respects, talk directly to an insider-researcher.

First, while the literature emphasises the advantages of life history collection by a female on females (Finch, 1984), I found that total and automatic integration and empathy was not easy to achieve. Instead, I found that at least initially, my (perceived) age and, especially, my socio-economic status tended to stand between me and the potential respondents, threatening to undermine our common attributes based on gender. With regard to age, I realised that those women who were much older than me were not as candid in discussing some personal aspects of their lives, such as the causes of their divorce, etc. They also required a lot of prompting and re-assurances as to the confidentiality in the usage of data. I also found that there were questions about their lives and past which I could not freely and vigorously pursue because of our age differences and the cultural expectation which dictates the kinds of topics one can pursue with adults (see also Miles, p.54).

My perceived socio-economic status also posed some kind of a dilemma in the initial stages. Many of the poorest respondents were somewhat embarrassed to discuss candidly their material conditions and income generating activities. For example, some of my respondents who operated *shebeens*[5] were not readily willing to divulge this information, because they think of this practice as unacceptable to people of a certain "class". Discussing sensitive issues could be much easier for a foreign researcher because respondents are assured of total anonymity. In such cases, in order to help people relax, I found that I had to share something of myself. I realised that narrators related their stories more freely if they viewed the interview relationship as an

[5]*Shebeens* are liquor outlets operated from home. Patrons may either consume their drinks on the premises or buy a take-away.

exchange relationship based on an equal footing[6].

This sharing gives them an opportunity of assessing a researcher's opinions on aspects which they would otherwise find embarrassing to relate (see also Miles, 1991, pp.50 and 53). Having gained my trust most respondents talked spontaneously and were not intimidated by my tape-recording of the conversations. Nevertheless, some respondents wanted their identities to be withheld when the oral histories were being written up.

Another dilemma was related to making choices of whether to give the respondents gifts of money once the interview was complete. Some of the respondents gave up to six hours of their time between the very first preliminary interviews and the oral history collection process. I realised the extent of this sacrifice in terms of their valuable time, and therefore gave all the women who took part in oral histories varying gifts of money. My awareness of the poverty in which some of these families live forced me to give them some tokens of gratitude. The fact that women were not told before-hand that they would receive some money minimised the biases in oral history collection which could have resulted from an expectation of cash incentives.

My familiarity with the cultures and customs, and various languages of the interviewees is undoubtedly a great strength of the qualitative findings of this study (Bozzoli, 1991). These common characteristics with the interviewees helped me to grasp the hidden meanings in their testimonies (Spradley, 1979; Robertson, 1983).

[6] The literature advises against over-rapport with informants (e.g. Oakley, 1981), but without my willingness to share in the discussions in a non-hierarchical manner, I think the interviewees would not have felt as free to tell me their stories.

This would have been very difficult for a foreign researcher to achieve, given time and resource limitations such as I faced. Yet these advantages presented some challenges during the process of transcribing.

The literature does not offer much guidance to the insider-researcher on transcribing and interpreting into a foreign language testimonies collected in various indigenous languages. I found that each testimony was replete with hidden meanings and cultural nuances. While it is very valuable to detect these, theory does not give clear guidance as to what extent the undertones built into life stories should form part of a final scholarly text. While one is advised to "shed agendas" in the process of producing a woman's oral history (Anderson and Jack, 1991, p.12), it is left entirely to the researcher to determine to what extent the respondent's original testimony is represented in the final text.

Borland (1991) has argued that the issues of transcribing and interpretation call for the researcher's acute responsibility to her "living sources". The researcher's original stated goals in collecting life histories are, therefore, a good indicator of how the oral history material will be finally used, and the extent to which the respondent's original testimonies will get represented.

As in all similar studies, issues of interpretation of oral histories have had to be confronted in this study. Very controversial matters such as typicality and reliability while collecting, transcribing and writing up oral histories for this research (Vansina, 1985; Crapanzano, 1984; Geiger, 1992) were confronted. Much effort has been made

to represent the respondents' original testimonies as accurately as possible within the limitations of the technique (Vansina, 1985).

However, in using oral history technique for this study I was less concerned with the typicality of the individuals, than with documenting, as appropriate, the diversities of their experiences. In other words, the strength of this study can be assessed by the extent to which it has succeeded in documenting the diversity of survival strategies employed by women in Orlando East.

The representativeness and typicality required for academic research have been addressed through the use of semi-structured interviews and secondary data. Portelli (1981) and Miles (1991) both support the notion that because life histories are not adequate sources of social research, their role should be regarded only as complementary.

Finally, a study which uses life history technique has to confront the question of reliability. Factors such as deliberate fabrication (Miles, 1991), failed memory (Keegan, 1988), and researcher bias (Townsend, 1990) may introduce distortions into the life story. Keegan (1988) advises that life history material should consistently be checked against other sources for validation. In this study all the oral history material has been checked against the interview schedules, secondary sources, and where possible with other household members and neighbours. Further, both Townsend and Miles suggest that life histories should be written up as an interactive text by placing the testimonies of women within a narrative and commentary constructed in a

researcher's own words. In this thesis I follow the same principle.

1.6 The Outline of the Thesis

This report brings together three main parts. These are: theoretical and conceptual debates, the socio-economic and political profile of South Africa, and the major findings of the study and their policy implications.

Chapter 2 explores the theoretical and conceptual issues relating to women and gender relations in the Third World, households and survival strategies. The articulation of race and class in defining gender relations is briefly explored with the aim of providing a framework within which the position of African women in South Africa should be understood. It also considers some factors determining gender relations in sub-Saharan Africa.

In Chapter 3, I present a general socio-economic and political profile of South Africa. A particular focus is paid on the urban informal sector and the role of women within it, the employment situation, the education system, and urbanisation processes and policies. The two final parts of this chapter are dedicated to the history and socio-economic conditions of Soweto and Orlando East respectively.

Chapters 4 to 8 discuss the major findings of this study. Chapter 4 discusses the socio-economic profile of the sample population. In particular it examines causes and prevalence of female household headship in Soweto, with a specific focus on Orlando East. It also considers household incomes, expenditures and budgetary positions of

female household heads. The data discussed in this chapter help to create a backdrop against which the data generated from oral testimonies should be assessed.

Chapters 5 to 7 discuss an array of household and neighbourhood survival strategies employed by women who are the heads of households in Orlando East. All the findings are presented here with a view to their relevance to understanding the general position of low income urban African female-headed households in South Africa.

Chapter 5 discusses the role of non-market transfers and grassroots organisations as supportive mechanisms for women heads whose incomes are both small and unreliable. Chapter 6 assesses the value of and the role played by the extended family within the context of poverty and unemployment in Orlando East. Chapter 7 considers the women heads' use of time. It also explores the divisions of labour and welfare within women-headed households and the ideologies and beliefs by which these divisions are determined.

Chapter 8 draws together the perspectives of women on all the issues discussed above, i.e. poverty, household headship and survival strategies. In this chapter the voices of women are louder than mine as their stories revitalise all the data presented in previous chapters. In chapter 8 the usage of background literature and statistical analysis has been relegated to the background in order to "allow women to speak in their own voices."

Finally, Chapter 9 draws together the major findings of the study, presents its conclusions, and makes recommendations for future policy and research.

CHAPTER TWO

GENDER, HOUSEHOLDS AND SURVIVAL STRATEGIES IN THIRD WORLD CITIES: CONCEPTUAL DEBATES

2.0 Introduction

Chapter 2 sets out to examine conceptual debates surrounding the question of gender, households, and survival strategies in the Third World. This chapter is divided into four sections. Firstly, the articulation of race and class in shaping gender relations and subordination of women will be critically examined. This discussion is considered useful in elucidating the position of black South African women who are the subject of the present study.

Secondly, the factors determining gender relations in sub-Saharan Africa will be briefly examined, with emphasis placed on southern Africa so as to avoid gross generalisation. It will be argued that the present position of women is due both to the articulation of pre-colonial traditional systems and colonial ones. Thirdly, the conceptualisation of the household and its functions will be examined.

The fourth and final section explores an array of survival strategies employed by the urban poor, with specific reference to women. It will be argued that poverty is not only about material want, but is also about *insecurity*, lack of choice and helplessness (Chambers, 1989). Among other strategies, the role of the micro-enterprise sector to the survival of the poor will receive particular attention.

A host of theoretical approaches to, and conceptual frameworks for, the study of women and gender in the Third World have borrowed their viewpoints from historical and contemporary studies of women in the western world, particularly Europe and North America. As a result of this, none of these approaches succeed in fully portraying the complex dynamics characteristic of Third World women's lives. Case studies targeting women and gender in Africa (Roberts, 1984; Amaidume, 1987) suggest that conventional (Western) feminist discourse suffers serious limitations in their analysis of the situation of Third World women. Brydon and Chant (1989) further point out that existing theories tend to vary widely, and there seems to be a lack of consensus, and even contradictions, among different strands of analyses that claim to belong to the same school of thought. In fact there is now a wave of writers, some of whom are of Third World origin, who have highlighted the undesirability of the widely generic and essentialist nature of works which have sought to lump all women into single homogeneous categories (e.g. Amadiume, 1987; Fouche, 1993; hooks, 1984; Mohanty, 1991). The outcry has been that by doing this, in the name of a feminist perspective, these contributions tend to underplay the diversity of women's experiences in these countries.

However, despite their limitations, these western studies have contributed immensely, if not always usefully, to our understanding of aspects which shape gender relations in the Third World. They have also contributed considerably in highlighting significant trends which those researchers studying their local communities may begin to follow in addressing micro-issues. Therefore, instead of rejecting the existing theories on the grounds that they originated from the west and that they are inadequate in explaining

the situation of Third World women, feminist researchers should begin to seek viable intellectual terrain from where debates could be exchanged. Indeed, failure to engage western feminist theories and concepts may prove counter-productive, and may perpetuate the view that the role of women of colour or of Third World women is, as hooks (1984) puts it, to contribute their experience to substantiate the analysis of western feminists.

The debates in this thesis are essentially informed by the feminist paradigm now widely adopted by researchers seeking to highlight the diversities and similarities of the subordinate positions of women worldwide (e.g. hooks, 1982; 1984; Momsen and Townsend, 1987; Elson, 1991; Mohanty, *et al*, 1991; Beneria and Feldman, 1992). Although their emphases and frameworks often differ, they all maintain that the roots of women's subordination must be sought both within the sphere of production and reproduction, not only in economic structures, but in socio-cultural structures as well. In adopting a feminist perspective this thesis does not promote any one particular feminist position. Instead, the emphasis is put on the understanding that all strands of feminism share a single overriding goal of improving the position of women in society by, among other things, making their roles more visible (Little, Peake and Richardson, 1988). Little *et al* (1988) urge geographers and other social scientists to begin "to discuss topics and themes that have a significance for women's experience and understanding of everyday life" (p.4). In order to do this, it is suggested that we should reject the differences between the subjective and the objective, a typically androcentric approach to the analysis of social processes. In this study subjective approaches have been applied alongside objective ones to gain more understanding of

women's circumstances.

2.1. The Intersection of Race and Class in Defining Gender Relations

Ideological, ethnic, economic, spatial and religious factors are some of several variables which shape and define gender relations. Race and class, however, are considered central in elucidating the position of women who are the subject of this research. This is because gender subordination in South Africa varies according to racial and class specifics. It is argued that in South Africa and many other societies with a recent colonial legacy, class identity is, by and large, tantamount to racial identity, and the interplay of both these factors account for experiences which are qualitatively different between white and black women (Gaitskell, *et al*, 1984). This is not to argue that women of colour always qualify as members of a distinct (lower) class different from white women. Indeed, some black women do not fit into the lower class category, as much as there are white women whose daily experiences and aspirations are removed from those of their more privileged counterparts. Nevetherless, in general terms it is largely accurate to associate white women with power and privilege, and to regard them as belonging to a distinct class.

To begin with, a clarification of the place of theory in the analysis which follows is pertinent. The interplay of race and class has been the subject of serious feminist debate. The problem with these is that they are often conducted at a level of high theoretical abstraction, although the questions they pose can more easily be understood by referring to specific social formations (Cock, 1981). When we talk of gender relations within the household or at the workplace, for example, we are referring to

actual lives which people lead (Bazilli, 1991), and the way in which we frame our arguments should of necessity reflect that awareness. Therefore, this analysis is not intended as a treatise on race, class and gender per se, but debates are employed only to authenticate the empirical points arising from the thesis.

While social processes have ensured that women generally occupy subordinate positions to those of men, there are important class differences which make the generalisation about the common position of women a problematic one. In a country like South Africa the recognition of the impact of class and race in the analysis of gender relations is essential to transcend the differences, and begin to deal with issues realistically.

The erroneous assumption that gender oppression is universally similar resulted in a cliche in South Africa that black women are triply oppressed. Until recently, it was argued that African women and other Black women are oppressed not only as women, but by virtue of their class and race as well. Fouche (1994, p.82) has challenged this "additive approach" for wrongly implying that black women's experience of gender oppression is qualitatively similar to that of white women. She argues that the interaction of race, class and gender is more dynamic and complex than additive, and the implications of gender oppression among women of different classes are therefore qualitatively distinct.

Because of the different classes to which they belong and the qualitative differences of their experience of gender oppression, white and black women do not respond in

the same way to male domination. Women of certain classes have been known to behave in ways which perpetuate gender inequalities, but which are considered to be in the best interest of the conservation of their class position. For example, Cock (1980) has pointed to the significance of the South African white household as a site of reproduction of race and class. She has argued that while white "madams" are themselves subject to gender oppression, most [rightly] do not regard their position as similar to that of African women, and they by and large view themselves as distinct from African women whom they employ as their domestic servants. In the same vein, it is difficult for black domestic servants to perceive the similarity between themselves and their white female employers. The mere sharing of gender therefore does not provide an adequate basis for their similarity.

Arguing from a Marxist perspective, Bujra (1978) asserts that the class hierarchy makes it structurally problematic for the women belonging to different classes to develop a collective consciousness of their positions and mobilize to transform that position. In other words, by virtue of their belonging to different classes women are not in a position to take seriously one another's respective position and therefore find a common ground on which to mobilise for common issues. In line with this observation, Bernstein (1985), for example, noted that, by and large, white South African women did not associate themselves with the prominent women's organizations during the liberation struggle. A few which did (i.e. academics, Black Sash, and Federation of South African Women members) were regarded as behaving in an improper way by other white people (Walker, 1991). What were pressing issues for black women at the time were not regarded as such by the mass of white women.

Even if women had the shared consciousness, membership of women to different classes further determines the *choices* they have in dealing with their situation. Women who are economically independent, for example, are in a better position to challenge gender bias both at home and in the work place. For working class African women therefore, pressing issues would seem to be related more to the survival of their household than to gender equality.

Traditional marxist feminism has been criticised for its tendency to overstate class differences at the expense of an analysis of gender differences (Walby, 1990). The position of a woman in traditional marxist analysis is believed to be determined by her class membership. However, in view of the overwhelming evidence that men and women who occupy the same position in the class hierarchy are often subjected to different gendered experiences and enjoy unequal opportunities, recent feminist theories have sought to explain gender differentials in the distribution of resources between men and women of the same class. The gender differential in the distribution of resources is a theme running throughout this thesis.

This brief review of class and race questions was considered pertinent because it stresses the fact that it is not possible to understand the fabric of gender relations outside its class context. This is a necessary precondition in a multi-cultural society like South Africa because, as Fouche (1994) argues, an understanding of class differences serves to invalidate unrealistic sisterhood and allows women to accept those among them who hold different views.

The section which follows examines key socio-economic and cultural determinants of women and gender relations in sub-Saharan Africa.

2.2. Women and Gender in Sub-Saharan Africa

It is a difficult task to generalise about the position of women and gender in sub-Saharan Africa because of their very varied experiences which are culture- and country-specific as well as wide disparities in a number of general indicators among component countries that form the region (Editorial, Signs, 1991). Therefore, only those factors deemed relevant for clarifying the socio-economic position of women in the region will be considered in this section. In particular, the effect of colonialism in the region will be examined critically because it is believed that colonialism transformed the household economy into a competitive unit, and in many ways re-inforced gender inequality within the home.

Control by colonial powers in sub-Saharan Africa impacted differently on different countries, and thus the impact on women's positions and gender relations in these countries varied (Cutrufelli, 1983). Different theoretical positions have been taken on the impact of colonisation on Africa's social and economic systems, and gender debates considering the subject have generally based their arguments on these general positions. One opinion is that colonisation brought progressive social change in African social systems. It is argued that colonialism, as a stage of capitalist development, afforded women a chance to go and work in town, to improve their education, which in turn helped to eradicate traditional outlooks and enhanced their individualism - developments which were, on the whole, positive for women. But

those who view colonialism and neo-colonialism negatively, such as Rodney (1972), have argued that colonialism encouraged the disintegration of African economic and cultural systems. They argue that it is more logical to regard any advantages women, and for that matter Africans in general, gained from colonialism as purely coincidental. The latter position sounds plausible as there is no evidence pointing to the colonial administrators' framework of African development, and the so-called positive innovations should be weighed against the setbacks suffered by Africans in general, and by women in particular.

For all African countries colonisation meant the wide-scale penetration of capitalism. This, in practical terms meant increasing monetisation of indigenous economies, as well as the advent of the commoditization of productive resources, especially land (Brydon and Chant, 1989; Cutrufelli, 1983). These changes impacted differently on men and women. For men the changes signalled their entry to the waged labour market, and for women they entailed more control of their movement and labour by both men and new colonial masters. Cutrufelli (1983, p.23) suggests that women were forced to remain in the village to keep the traditional sector of the economy going so that it "re-absorbs the [male] labour force when they were ill, old or had been ejected from the advanced, European economic sector." Eldredge (1991) has also showed how colonialism, by depriving Africans of the means of production intensified the struggle over remaining resources between men and women, and therefore upset the traditional basis of gender relations.

However, African women's responses to the onset of colonialism were not all that

straightforward. Walker (1990) for example, has argued that while women saw the benefits in the new systems introduced by colonialists and many took advantage of the new market economy, and imbibed the teachings of Christianity, they resisted some changes and defended many of the old cherished practices. Walker suggests that age and marital status were important determinants shaping the way different women responded. Generally, older women whose security and status were vested in the perpetuation of the farming and traditional systems actively resisted the onset of the capitalist modes of production. Indeed, the power enjoyed by older women in many traditional African households at the expense of their daughters-in-law, to date, is a feature of unequal status and respect accruing to different generations of women, and may attest to the above observation.

Christian religion is one factor introduced by the colonial missionaries in Africa which has apparently had long lasting effects on the gender relations in the African household. It has been argued that in many ways western religious dogma strengthened and reinforced the domesticity of women among the indigenous communities. Analysing the gendered nature of teachings of early missionaries at Edendale Mission station in Natal, Meintjies (199O), for example, notes that the missionary wives were in charge of the domestic side of teaching, imparting home management skills to women and girls. On the other hand, men were responsible for productive activities outside the home. She also notes that in the mission household women were expected to be subservient and subordinate to their husbands, and only act to support them. In other colonised countries such as Latin America it is reported that Catholicism is often evoked as a form of justification for the oppression of

women (Cubitt, 1988; Bridges, 1980). These teachings have been carried over to schools and work places where different values are attributed to the roles of men and women.

It is problematic to decide to what extent the present nature of gender relations are a product of a colonial and neo-colonial systems in Africa, or of traditional African practices which were already in place before the onset of colonialism and capitalism. It is quite clear though from the literature that some traditional practices which defined gender relations in a manner which was oppressive to women were in place long before European contact (Dolphyne, 1991), and they still survive. Perhaps, rather than overemphasising the role of colonialism in shaping gender relations, it is better to conceive of gender relations in an African context as an outcome of the interplay of both traditional practices and colonial influence.

It has been argued that despite the domesticating religious doctrine, women of sub-Saharan Africa often find themselves under less pressure to conform to their religious beliefs compared to their counterparts in other countries. In other words, despite the fact that a significant number of Africans are either Muslim or Christian, women in this region do not experience oppression mainly because of their religious affiliation. It has been argued that the adherence of the majority of Africans to the teachings of independent (i.e. spiritual, apostolic) churches, which are now common in Africa might have contributed to this departure from the taming influence of major world religions.

The African population is a largely rural farming community. Gilbert and Gugler (1992) estimated that the overall percentage of Africans residing in urban areas was just less than 38 percent in 1980. There are of course wide variations within component countries; as the discussion in Chapter 3 shows that South Africa is the most urbanised country in Africa. Because of the importance placed on farming, land is considered a very important asset by Africans. In southern Africa the family land is often controlled by a man, despite the fact that the majority of farmers are actually women. The situation is rather different in west African countries, e.g. in Ghana, where most women control their own farms on which they grow staple foods primarily for subsistence purposes (Dolphyne, 1991). They also sell the extra produce in order to supplement the family income. Unlike in southern Africa, the common practice in west Africa is that women and men have separate and distinct budgets. Apart from working on their own farms, women are also expected to, and they do, work on their husbands' farms, and this expectation does not apply to men (Afonja, 1990). Afonja (1990) mentions also that women usually are allotted very small pieces of land, and they therefore combine their farm labour with independent income-generating activities. The few women who own farms are either widows or have inherited the land directly from their fathers. The major expenditure such as providing housing is usually the responsibility of a man, while a woman is expected to provide for the daily survival needs of her household.

The national sex ratio in many sub-Saharan countries is slightly in favour of women. The average sex ratio for the region is 102 women for every 100 men (United Nations, 1991). This is due to a combination of reasons, the most notable of which is

longer life expectancy for women compared to men. Also, those countries which were ravaged by wars, such as Angola and Mozambique, have had their sex ratios influenced in favour of women. In other countries such as Botswana, Mozambique and Malawi, which are source areas for South African migrant labour, (resident) women often outnumber men. Because of all these factors, it can be argued that a significant number of households in this region is, in practical terms, headed by women.

Most important however, the effects of structural adjustment policies in Africa have exacerbated the poverty levels and forced increased participation of women in the labour market, especially participation in the informal sector. Of course, this does not mean that women's emancipation from patriarchal structures should be viewed only in these narrow economic terms, but economic changes affecting the lives of women should be taken on board because the very premise of some oppressive practices in Africa such as polygamy are predicated on the assumption of the male's sole responsibility for supporting the household.

Women's likelihood to be *de facto* heads and their working outside the home have however not automatically transformed into better status and recognition for the majority of African women. Whether a household is matrilineal, where lineage is traced through the mother or patrilineal, where lineage is traced through the father, patriarchal practices are still a norm in Africa. Some examples attest to this fact: the practice of purdah by African Moslem societies where women are secluded and not allowed to work outside the home; and the negative response which a widow provokes and her seclusion in the period immediately after her husband's death (Dolphyne,

1991), are only some of the widespread rituals and practices applicable only to women. More fundamentally, women on their own are generally accorded less respect than married women, so that "whatever her education, professional status or economic independence, an African woman would not normally choose to remain single..." (Dolphyne, 1991, p.16). This is particularly true for rural traditional communities. More discriminatory for women than for men, is the expectation of a woman to have children to prove her womanhood, and a childless marriage is systematically blamed on a woman. Despite country variations, these practices can be said to be generally accurate for most African countries.

As mentioned earlier, the societal attitudes which define gender relations are acted out in the daily lives of individual men and women. In those homes where men are often absent for extended periods of time, or where women are economically independent because they have personal earnings, men still wield immense power within the home. A study by Wright (1993) in Lesotho showed that men still enjoy enormous power and monopoly of decision making at the expense of women despite the latter's relative economic independence.[1] She reported instances of men who hit their wives if, on their return home for holidays, they consider the wife to have made important household decisions during the man's absence.

The general picture indicates inequalities in the status accorded to women and men. This, it was shown, arises from societal beliefs and often operationalised through

[1] In Botswana and Lesotho, on the whole, women enjoy a better educational status then men (United Nations, 1991) and, therefore, relative economic independence compared to their counterparts in neighbouring countries.

various institutions, especially the family. To reiterate, this overview was meant only as a general analysis of key factors determining relations between African men and women, the country variations are fully recognised. The next section explores the household as a concept, and its functioning. The causes, scale and prevalence of female- headed households are also explored.

2.3. Households: Conceptual Debates

It is generally assumed that the household is a common form of social organisation in most regions of the developing world, and often represents the primary site for the structuring of gender relations (Brydon and Chant, 1989), and it is agreed that the household is the primary site for the reproduction and enactment of gender subordination (Harris, 1981). Depending on which perspective the writer adopts the household has been defined in many different ways.

For instance, Townsend and Momsen (1987, p.40), arguing from the Marxist feminist point of view, identify the household as an "arena of subordination". Alternatively, paraphrasing Makintosh (1979) and Robertson (1984), Brydon and Chant (1989, p.9) loosely define the household as a residential unit whose members share 'domestic' functions and activities, a group of people "who eat out of the same pot" or who "share the same bowl". Jelin (1991, p.33) adopts a similar line when she argues that a household is:

> "a social organisation, a microcosm of productive, reproductive and distributive relationships, with a structure of authority and strong ideological components that cement the organisation and foster its continuation and reproduction."

Brydon and Chant (1989) point out, however, that although members of the household often share residence, this does not always apply, nor do they necessarily share consumption. Furthermore many writers (e.g. Harris, 1984; Fapohunda, 1988; Jelin 1991; Kabeer, 1991) argue that despite the observation that there is normally some amount of interaction taking place within the household, it should not be taken for granted that such interaction entails cooperation among the members. Depending on the structure, size and functioning of the household there can be wide disparities in terms of the inputs (or lack thereof) the members are likely to make.

Realising the uniqueness and complexity of the intra-household dynamics, and keen to depart from a neo-classical economics approach in the analysis of household functioning, Armatya Sen (1990) introduces a co-operative conflict model as a framework for understanding household functioning. Sen argues that the members of the household face two types of problems at the same time, one involving conflict and the other co-operation. The decisions reached within the household - be they around food distribution and entitlement, or around the division of labour - are all based on gendered processes of co-operation and conflict. This model is very useful as it disaggregates household functioning, and challenges a view common among neo-classical economists that a benevolent patriarch within the household makes decisions which maximise the welfare of all household members (Tinker, 1990). Sen's model is considered useful in explaining the division of labour along gender lines within the household, and I will therefore elaborate on its tenets in Chapter 7 where housework will be discussed.

To further illuminate the problem of trying to define the household as an entity Brydon and Chant mention the importance of inter-household networks of reciprocity. Their argument imply that it is often not sensible to draw boundaries of household functioning. They observe that (p.9-10):

> "households may not be visible entities in terms of buildings or sets of rooms within residential units, but isolable only in terms of specific functions such as cooking or the pooling of finance; or on the other hand, there may be active inter-household networks of reciprocity and exchange which are regular features of multi-family compounds and low income neighbourhoods."

As this study found, inter-household networks were often considered important for household survival, at times more critical a means than intra-household transfers. The findings discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 variously attest to this observation.

The controversies surrounding the household concept might lead one to question whether an analysis of gender issues using the household approach is relevant at all. A significant factor in favour of adopting the household as a unit of analysis is the importance of highlighting women's dual roles of reproduction and production. The household is the most potent domain where it is demonstrated that women and men have quite divergent needs and predicaments, and for development planning purposes in particular, this realisation has very fundamental implications. Sen (1990, p.124) has pointed out, for example, that "to concentrate on family poverty irrespective of gender can be misleading in terms of both causation and circumstances."

In the present study the household as a unit of analysis has been maintained, while its complexity both as a concept and a functional unit is recognised. The gendered nature of its functioning and its shifting boundaries both in terms of functions and

composition are emphasised.

For analytical purposes, some researchers have identified different types of households likely to be found in the Third World. Their emphasis differ depending on the purposes of their analyses. Brydon and Chant (1989) for instance, have identified seven major types basing their profile on shared dwellings, and distinctions have been made along the axes of composition, headship and organisation of domestic functions. In reality however, as they themselves point out, households cannot be usefully placed in categories because in reality they are dynamic units and their elements change depending on many factors which are either internal or external, and which may be short- or long-term.

In his study of households in Lesotho, Murray (1981) repeatedly cautions against the essentialist approach of conceptualising households as either nuclear or extended forms, a practice very common among researchers keen to provide a framework for their analyses. He criticises the respective fallacies of essentialism, because both these views of the household, among other things, ignore the developmental cycle of the domestic unit which manifests itself in a statistical diversity of types of household composition at different points in time. Murray (p.103) further highlights the tendency, popular among employers, of glorifying the extended family, by using the term in a residual sense "to refer to something that allegedly accommodates everyone (the sick, the unemployed, the elderly) in default of decent wages or social security arrangements." Without doubt, the distinction between household types and/or structures is only useful for theoretical and analytical purposes. Even then, the

framework used can only be usefully applied in a culturally- and situationally-specific context.

In this study, the household unit has been used to refer to a common unit of social organisation combining both shared residence and shared reproduction such as income generation, consumption and domestic activities such as cooking and eating. By nature of this definition therefore, those members of the family who permanently reside on their own, and do not contribute to household income are not part of the household as it is defined by the present study. Also those who make some contribution to household resources while not residing there are not considered as part of the said household (Muthwa, 1994). This definition has been preferred because by virtue of its parameters it emphasises the *day-to-day* functioning of the household. It is assumed that providing materially for the household when not living in it, while not unimportant, is not quite the same as making resource distribution decisions, a function undertaken by those who reside in the home on a regular basis. An emphasis on resource allocation is considered central when one is dealing with poor families as the process may be stressful indeed in the face of insecure incomes. The section which follows explores the household form which is the subject of this study: the female-headed household. The analysis explores firstly, the female-headed household as an analytical concept, and examines the causes, scale and prevalence of female-headed households in the Third World.

2.3.1. Female-headed Households

Women-headed households often refer to a woman who resides without a male partner, but with her own children. Buvinic and Youssef (1978) suggest it is useful to differentiate between *de jure* and *de facto* female heads of households. Most literature refers to *de jure* female heads as those who have never set up home with the father of their children or who are legally or permanently separated from them because of divorce, desertion or widowhood. Alternatively, *de facto* female household heads are those whose spouses are temporarily unavailable, or those who, despite living with their partners, continue to retain the dominant economic and organisational role in the household (Buvinic, and Youssef, 1978). Buvinic and Youssef point out that in the case of *de facto* female heads the "the marital union is often regarded as intact, and the woman is often recorded as married (statistically)", regardless of either the residence of the male spouse, or the economic responsibilities assumed by the woman.

The above categories are on the whole accurate denotations of female household heads. Yet, it is possible to deduce that these definitions derive from an assumption of a universality of the nuclear household. The definitions make no explicit reference to those women who, while they do not live with the spouse, are still heads of mixed-gender households. The importance of this consideration was brought home to me during field research as I encountered many households which had one or more adult male in residence, who was not necessarily a partner, but whose residence in the home makes a woman's status of headship dubious, at least in the view of some household members or of the community. In line with the purpose of my study which is to determine the economic survival strategies of surveyed households, I resolved to

determine household headship mainly by economic functions. In this study therefore all women who were identified as heads are those who are chiefly responsible for *day-to-day budgeting* and *organisational* aspects of household functioning. The next section considers the prevalence of female household headship as a phenomenon in the Third World. It also examines its causes.

2.3.2. Causes, Scale and Prevalence of Female-Headed Households in Third World Cities

In an area where there still is a paucity of material in general, it is rather difficult to compare data on women-headed households in Third World cities. Where the information is available it is often scattered and uncoordinated reflecting the research interests, methods and emphases of different writers, as well as trends in the region where the study focuses. Nevertheless, using available literature, this sub-section looks into the causes and incidence of women-headed households in Third World cities.

It has been estimated that approximately thirty percent of the world's households are headed by women (Chant, 1991). It is widely agreed that women-headed households are more common in the urban areas of the Third World compared to rural areas. Brydon and Chant (1989) cite numerous studies to this effect: for example, Bolles (1986) found that women-headed households are more frequently found in the metropolitan areas of Kingston compared to rural areas of Jamaica. Similarly, Skinner (1984) found that in Burkina Faso while women-headed households were generally uncommon, they were even more rare in the rural areas; and Joekes (1985) established

that 21 percent of urban households in Morocco were headed by women despite the fact that this household form is generally infrequent due to the traditional control of women by their menfolk. In South Africa, however, female-headed households are still more common in the rural areas than in urban areas because of the male work-related migration to cities (Chapter 4). However, one study of Witwatersrand households (cited by Beittel, 1992) has shown that female-headed households have increased among Africans in South Africa, rising from 14 percent to 29 percent between 1962 and 1985 in Soweto alone.

A number of factors seem to have contributed to the formation of female-headed households in Third World cities. These can broadly be divided into demographic and economic factors. The first demographic factor relates to women's greater life expectancy compared to men. Brydon and Chant (1989), for example, assert that in the case of Latin America the tendency of women to live longer has led to a situation where at least one-fifth of urban women head their own households. In sub-Saharan African cities however, female household headship cannot be linked to sex-ratios because in most cities men outnumber women.

Another demographic factor, which has been noted for different regions of the Third World, is large-scale migration of women to cities, and their subsequent decision to stay there permanently. This has largely resulted from diminishing livelihood opportunities in the rural setting for women, as well as changing attitudes towards female permanent migration to cities (Wolf, 1990; Chant, 1991).

A further factor in explaining the increase of female-headed households is the breakdown of traditional family units, often caused by the failure of a man to live up to a traditional role of being a provider for the household. For many reasons, most of which are economic, a man cannot always live up to this role, and a partner facing this situation has no option but to provide for the productive needs of the household as well as reproductive ones.

The cultural traditions of *machismo* in Latin America and polygamy in Africa have sometimes been offered as partial explanations of the rise of female-headed households in the cities. It is sometimes argued that the rise of female-headed households is linked to the changing attitudes of women towards these patriarchal practices. In South Africa, for example, it is now common for married women to defy their in-laws and husbands and leave the villages to seek work in the urban areas (Ramphele, 1993). I feel one has to be careful, however, not to overemphasise these cultural traditions and practices in explaining the rise of female-headed households because these forms of female subordination have always existed.

Chant (1991) points out that the incidence of female-headed households tends to be higher in cities where local demand for female labour is great. Cities with a large tertiary sector, for example, are likely to attract more female migrants, who come to cities on their own having left their families behind (see, also Wright, 1993).

Whatever the causes of the phenomenon of female household headship in Third World cities, a common characteristic of women-headed households is that they are largely

associated with poverty in most development literature (Buvinic, *et al* 1978; Momsen and Townsend, 1987; Rosenhouse, 1989; United Nations, 1991). The present study will seek, amongst other things, to assess how female heads perceive their portrayal as poor and how they deal with their circumstances.

The final section of this chapter looks into the survival strategies of the urban poor, with a special emphasis on petty-commodity production.

2.4. Household Survival Strategies of the Urban Poor

Borrowing concepts and methodologies from studies of rural poverty, there has been a growing mosaic of work on the survival strategies of the urban poor. Much emphasis has been put on small-scale informal economic activities as an increasingly used means of garnering income by households facing destitution in Third World cities. In this section I review some of the recent conceptual and empirical work on urban household survival strategies. This is followed by an assessment of the extent to which informal economic activities have been useful in alleviating poverty among the urban poor. In particular, the preponderance and the role of women within the sector will be emphasised in the analysis.

Earlier poverty studies were based on assumptions that the poor are passive victims of their circumstances (e.g. Townsend, 1971). Recent poverty studies however have been informed by a recognition that the poor are not passive, but engage in actions to deal with their situation which may range from the lack of entitlements (Sen, 1981) to powerlessness and vulnerability (Chambers, 1989). Studies seeking to understand

the responses of the poor at a household and neighbourhood level - their survival strategies - are now common, both in rural and urban development studies (e.g. Scott, 1990; Chambers, 1989; Rakodi, 1991; 1994; Beneria and Feldman, 1992). In this section I review these arguments briefly.

As was mentioned earlier, much work on urban household survival strategies has borrowed conceptually and methodologically from studies of rural poverty. It is therefore pertinent to start with a brief review of the prominent arguments made in such studies of rural poverty. The work of Robert Chambers is probably some of the most well-known in this field. It is argued that households always aim at sustainable livelihoods (Chambers, 1989; Chambers and Conway, 1992). These comprise of a portfolio of both tangible and intangible assets. Tangible assets are those such as stores of food or cash, and resources such as physical investments and/or skills. Intangible assets, on the other hand, comprise of things such as transfers from the state or others and right of access to services[2]. Households make decisions on how the portfolio they own is to be deployed. In periods of economic destitution they may deploy more household members to paid employment, dispose of their assets such as land and livestock, fulfil kinship responsibilities or develop informal networks.

The gamut of survival strategies employed depends on the portfolio held. The poorest households, which do not own any of the assets mentioned, may fail to devise coping strategies, and will therefore try to devise survival strategies (Rakodi, 1994). According to the above view, poverty is therefore not characterised only by a lack of

[2] These are similar to what Sen (1981) has referred to as right to entitlements.

assets, and inability to accumulate them, but also by a lack of choice of alternative coping strategies. Unlike coping strategies, which are usually sustainable, survival strategies only enable the poor "to protect their biological reproduction, by adaptation of behaviour and activities, but will not be sufficient to achieve security....." (Rakodi, 1994, p.11).

Adopting the above framework in her conceptualization of "livelihood" strategies employed by urban households, Rakodi (1994) argues that the poorest urban households only aim at survival, while those which are slightly better-off tend to engage in more profitable ventures. She found, however (not surprisingly) that it is women, particularly women household heads who are concentrated on the survivalist end of these ventures[3]. This is because these activities require little capital and have flexible hours compatible with women's domestic responsibilities. I find the distinction between survival and coping strategies very useful because it distinguishes between the activities of the poor and of the poorest. A gamut of survival (livelihood) strategies employed by the urban poor has been identified by researchers employing mainly qualitative and participatory research methods. I discuss a few such strategies below, with examples drawn mainly from the African context.

Rural and urban food production has been identified as one of the key strategies of survival by the urban poor in order to cope with diminishing incomes particularly within the context of structural adjustment (Rakodi, 1991). Potts and Mutambirwa (1990) found that some urban migrants in Harare maintained ties with the countryside

[3] This point is developed later in this section.

for purposes of subsistence farming and partly to raise cash crops to augment incomes earned in towns. Urban agriculture on the other hand, has become very significant for those households which have a plot of land available around their property or within walking distance (Rogerson, 1994). While food cultivation in rural areas is usually both for household consumption and retailing, food grown in cities is usually purely for subsistence purposes.

Another strategy of survival increasingly employed by the poor is the usage of collective efforts to counter economic hardships in cities (Beneria, 1992). Informal social networks among poor urban households, particularly women, prove very valuable against insecure and seasonal incomes. Rakodi (1994) cites the use of extended family ties as a popular support system in Africa. Apart from one-to-one forms of reciprocity, informal networks may also entail cooperative efforts in the form of community groups. Women are usually the ones behind the formation of community support groups. These are formed both for providing social support in a hostile urban environment, and material support in times of austerity or disaster such as illness or death. It has been suggested however that the poorest households which can barely survive find it difficult to maintain informal networks because these are based on mutual assistance, and tensions may result if there is a perceived unequal distribution of the survival burden (Rakodi, 1991). These points are further developed in Chapters 5 and 6 in the light of this study's findings.

Apart from informal sector activities (discussed in the next section), urban subsistence farming, use of extended family networks and other social networks, urban households

engage in a variety of other survival strategies. These may include purchasing cheaper, less nutritious food; increasing the number of family members, including children, taking up paid employment; decreased food consumption; postponing or forfeiting medical treatment; and many others (see, for example Pryer, 1993).

Decisions reached and options available as to how the household diversifies its scarce resources to ensure survival depend on a variety of factors within the households. These may be the ages of household members, the life-cycle stage of the household, educational levels of members, and accepted gender roles within the home. For example, it is widely reported that in very poor households, when it comes to food consumption women give preference to males, then to children, and they themselves eat only what is left over. When it comes to the usage of household finances, it is often a man who decides how the available cash is to be distributed, usually keeping some for himself. In her study of Harare households, Kanji (1994) found that men often kept extra cash for personal use, even when there was scarcity in the household. For the above reasons, it is critical to be aware of and to unravel the intra-household dynamics when studying poverty and concomitant survival strategies. In particular, the pivotal roles played by women in diversifying household resources need to be studied in their own right. Rakodi (1994), among others, maintains that the relative failure of studies to do this is caused by the invisibility of the impact of women's economic activities which are often an extension of their household reproductive roles.

In the next sub-section I discuss the role of the urban informal sector in household survival. The informal sector is discussed in some detail here because of the wide

reliance of the urban poor, particularly women, on it.

2.4.1. The Urban Informal Sector as a Survival Strategy

The use of the term "informal sector" has been widely criticised for the fluid applicability of the concept, encompassing such small-scale activities as street trading and very large-scale ones such as operating a major taxi business. Since the utility of the informal sector concept was first recognised, it has been applied to a wide diversity of empirical data, and in many different contexts. Gilbert and Gugler (1982) have argued that the shortcomings of the informal sector concept are such that they invalidate any attempt at policy prescription.

Among others, Rogerson (1994) recognised the above problems with the concept, and the diversity of activities classified under the informal sector, and has usefully classified informal sector activities as either *survival* or *growth* oriented[4]. Those informal sector activities which are at the survivalist end of the scale are those geared to providing for the day-to-day sustenance of the operators, often very vulnerable and not capable of growth. Here I concentrate on such small economic activities because women predominate in them.

As mentioned earlier, women who operate in the informal sector are usually concentrated in home-based activities which, while they are usually low in scale, combine with their domestic responsibilities such as housework and child care

[4] This thinking is very much in line with the stance of coping and survival strategies discussed earlier.

(Rakodi, 1994). In the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vaal (PWV) region of South Africa studies have found that women are concentrated in such activities as selling cooked food, dressmaking, child minding, *"shebeneering"*, etc. (e.g. Beavon and Rogerson, 1986; Budlender, 1994).

While some South African studies have encountered instances of successful women informal sector operators, many show that women are more usually relegated to the least profitable and insecure of all informal sector activities while men dominate the more profitable ones such as wood processing, car repairs, *spaza*[5] shops, transportation, etc. (Beavon and Rogerson, 1986; Friedman and Hambridge, 1991). Many factors militate against the potential for growth of women's enterprises. Women's relative lack of access to material resources such as credit and loan facilities has been widely reported in the literature (Friedman and Hambridge, 1991). Yet another problem limiting the growth and profitability of even those women's enterprises which have growth potential, is that women's informal incomes are used as supplementary, or even (as this study also found) as sole household incomes (Rogerson, 1994). In other words, because the responsibility for day-to-day household provisioning lies more with women than with men (Guyer, 1980), it is women who tend to devote more of their informal sector incomes to daily household expenditure, and less is invested in "business" to ensure its growth and improved profitability.

[5] *Spaza* shops are small grocery shops which are run from home. *"Spaza"* is the township lingo used to refer to "an imitation of a real thing". The term might have been coined to avoid prosecution of those who operated these shops without proper licensing.

Because of a combination of constraints faced by women informal sector operators, even those rare enterprises which do prosper tend to grow at a rate slower than those operated by men. In their study of the informal sector in two South African townships, Liedholm and McPherson (1991) found that, among those enterprises which prosper, the one s operated by men expanded on average at a rate of 30 percent per annum, while those run by women, expanded at a rate of 21 percent.

As a means of household survival however, the urban informal sector remains the main source of livelihood for many households. In countries where levels of female employment have dropped even further as a result of structural adjustment programmes, it has meant that the informal sector activities are the only source of income for a considerable number of households. In those households where a partner's income is available, a woman's involvement in informal sector activities helps to augment that income.

2.5. Summary of Chapter 2

The purpose of Chapter Two was to create a conceptual background against which all the themes discussed in this study can be set. Because the present study is deliberately small-scale and localised, it is believed that issues discussed in this chapter will help create a broader context against which the validity and usefulness of the findings can be assessed.

Chapter 2 began by examining the interplay of race and class in the formation of gender relations. It was argued that race and class are particularly important in

appreciating the qualitative differences in the experiences and outcomes of gender relations between women and men. The critical analysis of race and class is regarded as fundamental in a multi-cultural society such as South Africa, and it helps to diffuse the sisterhood myth between white women and women of colour, thus helping to transcend the differences and begin to deal with the issues constructively. It was also pointed out that men and women occupying the same position in the class hierarchy have different gendered experiences. It was stressed that differentials in the experiences of men and women and the gendered distribution of resources is the theme which runs through this thesis.

The second section was dedicated to an analysis of women and gender relations in sub-Saharan Africa. It was argued that it is useful to examine the position of women and gender relations in Africa in a historical context. Therefore the impact of colonialism on traditional institutions was assessed, and it was argued that the interplay of colonial and pre-colonial structures exacerbated the position of women in the region. The current trends in the position of African women were examined and it was shown that, despite variations, women are still very much discriminated against and oppressed at all levels. In this analysis the culture-specific and socio-economic variations among component countries were acknowledged.

Drawing from different studies, the problems surrounding the household as an analytical concept and a functional unit were discussed in some detail, and it was argued that the household concept is only useful as an analytical construct, and it was shown that the essentialist approaches to the understanding of the household concept

are not helpful. It was pointed out that the household approach should, however, be employed to reveal the unequal power relations between men and women within it. The woman-headed household was discussed in some detail, charting the causes, scale and prevalence of female-headed households in Third World cities, and emphasising that in the literature female-headed households have commonly been associated with poverty.

Finally, a gamut of survival strategies employed by the urban poor were discussed. In analysing these it was noted that many of the qualitative urban studies in this regard have borrowed their methods and concepts from those of rural development. Among the survival strategies employed by the urban poor, the role played by the informal sector was particularly stressed, highlighting its usefulness for low income women struggling to provide for subsistence needs of their households, as well as the constraints they face.

This chapter covers a number of complex issues - a feature which possibly reveals the multi-faceted nature of issues addressed by this study.

Each of the ensuing chapters on the study's findings are presented in the light of the broader issues addressed by this chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

SOUTH AFRICA: A SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE

3.0. Introduction

The profile of South Africa constructed below is aimed at giving a clear picture of the country with special emphasis on the relevant historical and current socio-economic trends. It should be pointed out, however that the transitional political situation in South Africa presents some difficulty to the writer or researcher endeavouring to present phenomena either within a particular point in time or a specific context, because in recent years trends have tended to change too quickly, and as a result statistics on a number of social indicators have been rendered unreliable. This has been made more difficult by a recent transition to the multi-party democracy in April 1994. Despite this problem, great effort has been made to sift through different sources, in order to provide what is considered to be the most reliable representation of fact. Where no recent reliable data exist, statistics that date back a few years have been cited.

The first section of Chapter 3 offers a brief demographic profile of South Africa and the factors which influence it. The second section examines recent and current political trends in South Africa. This section is effectively a brief review of the political processes there, and no attempt is made to chronicle all the major dates and events, as that exercise is far beyond the scope of this thesis. The next section looks into the

inequalities in the provision of education in South Africa among different racial groups. It will be argued that this has led to unequal employment opportunities there. It is stressed that the transformation of the education system is one of the most important challenges facing the new multi-party democracy.

The fourth section will look into urbanisation processes in South Africa, with stress put on their outcomes for Africans. The fifth part examines the changing policies affecting the urban informal sector, and focuses on the preponderance of women within the sector. Sections 3.6. historically charts the development of Johannesburg and Soweto, and explores the current socio-economic conditions in Soweto. Finally, the last section focuses on Orlando East, the site for this study.

3.1 South Africa: The Land and the People

South Africa is located on the southernmost tip of the African continent. The country has a surface area of 1 221 042 square kilometres. Despite this relatively large surface area compared to the population, the majority of South Africans, particularly Africans, still reside under very overcrowded conditions due to the unequal distribution of land among race groupings, owing to the legacy of apartheid. Under the new dispensation South Africa is divided into nine provinces which incorporate the ex- "independent" homelands (Fig.3.1).

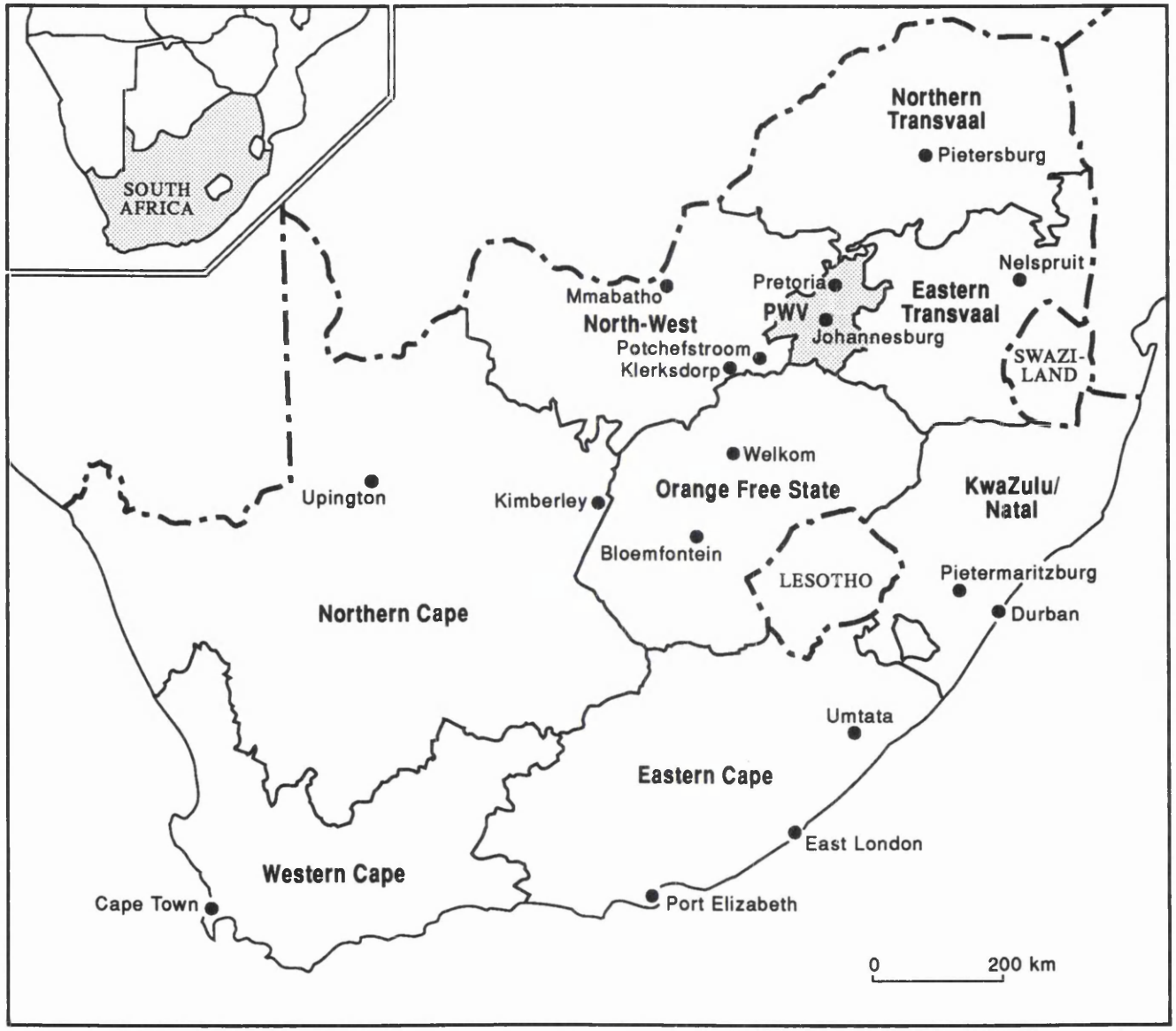


Fig. 3.1: South Africa - showing nine regions

When the ex-president F.W. De Klerk came into power most fundamental segregationist laws such as the Group Areas Act[1] were repealed in South Africa. Therefore, in principle, South Africans are no longer compelled by law to reside along racial lines. Yet, the pattern of unequal land distribution is still evident as most Africans are not in a position to move to previously "white" areas in the absence of direct redistributive policies which would empower them to acquire land rights in less populated areas (Lemon, 1991). Therefore, the distribution of land between Africans and Whites largely remains as it was in 1960 (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: The Racial Division of Land in South Africa (1960)
(% of the total population)

'white' land	87
'African' land	13
white population	15
African population	75

Source: *Adapted from Potts: 1992, p.24*

The greying of residential places has been observed in recent years in the inner city areas of major South African cities. Good examples are locations such as Hillbrow and Berea in Johannesburg where the settlement of Africans reached its peak at the beginning of the 1990's. Since the new government came into power, the municipal boundaries have been redrawn and some of the black-only townships now share a

[1] According to the provisions of the Group Areas Act (Act No.36 of 1966), specific trading and residential areas were set aside for different race groups, and ownership rights and occupation of property was to be determined by the government, and it was along racial lines. The Group Areas Act was widely condemned as the cornerstone of the apartheid policy in South Africa by both black and white critics of the system. For a more detailed analysis of the provisions, analysis and critique of the Act, see Horrell, (1956), as well as various SAIRR Topical Briefings on this Act and other segregationist legislations, particularly the one by Ebrahim (1987).

common tax-base with "white" residential areas (Beavon, 1995). This change is however at an administrative level only at present; the active process of genuinely merging the "haves" and "have-nots" has not yet begun. This is believed to be one of the main tasks facing local authorities after the local elections scheduled for October 1995.

There are four main population groups in South Africa. By far the largest group is the one officially designated as Black (i.e.African) under apartheid. The second largest group is the one designated as White which consists mainly of people of European descent. The third largest group is that known as Coloureds which is an amalgamation including the descendants of remnants of the original inhabitants of the Cape, the Khoisan and San; those of the Malay slaves imported in the early years of the Cape Colony; and the descendants of mixed marriages and cross-racial sexual unions. The final group is the Asian group, the majority of whom are the descendants of indentured Indian labour brought into the country in the late nineteenth century to work on the sugar-cane plantations in Natal.

All forms of racial segregation which was a way of life in South Africa for many decades officially came to an end in the period preceding the non-racial elections in 1994. Nevertheless, despite the political changes which have taken place in South Africa, it is still maintained that any effort to analyze South Africa in non-racial terms would be highly premature and therefore misleading. This is because differences in the socio-economic position of these four major population groups still remain largely unaltered.

In 1991 approximately 40 million people lived in South Africa (SAIRR,1993). This figure is made up of about 30 million Africans, 5 million Whites, 3.3 million Coloureds, and 1 million Indians (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2: South African Population (1992)

Population Group	Number	% of Total Pop.
African	29 889 600	75
Coloured	3 354 200	9
Indian	1 007 300	3
White	5 129 000	13
Total	**39 380 100**	**100**

Source: Calculated from *Race Relations Survey, 1992/3, p.255*

The population of South Africa is culturally and racially heterogeneous. Although the South African population is best analyzed along racial lines, the racial groups themselves are not homogeneous. The differences were fostered by the apartheid government over decades through its policy of separate development which was aimed at maintaining White supremacy by protecting the economic position and identity of the White group. Even those Blacks who were living in what was known as Black locations in White areas were divided according to their ethnicity. This was interpreted by most Black political activists as a strategy to weaken unity which was necessary for resistance against apartheid.

Despite the fact that the majority of Africans residing in the ex-homelands still reside according to ethnic groups, those Africans living in the townships which are not part of the ex-homelands, are now ethnically very mixed due to circular movements and

intermarriages among urban residents. Further, with the incidence of Black home ownership, the newest residential areas have seen a rise in the number of neighbourhoods that are not formed along ethnic lines. Therefore, in general terms, an analysis that examines the social conditions of black South Africans along ethnic lines is largely irrelevant[2]. Instead, the differences among black South Africans should be drawn in terms of their level of wealth, an aspect which sets apart a tiny segment of middle income Africans from their much poorer counterparts. This is particularly true for the urban areas where a small but ever increasing number of black professional and business people belong to a class which cannot positively be categorized as poor or belonging to low-income groups. A focused analysis of the present research case study area (Soweto, and Orlando East in particular) towards the end of this chapter will demonstrate this factor by, among other things, looking at the conditions under which the poorest Sowetans subsist compared to their economically better-off counterparts in the township.

3.2. The Political System: Recent Past and Present Trends

South Africa was for many years controlled by a White government that operated within the Westminster system. This was until 1984 when the Indian and the Coloured groups were incorporated in government through the formation of the tricameral parliament under the control of the State President and the Ministers' Council. In the tricameral parliament the three chambers were racially based, one for Whites (the

[2] While this is largely true, it should be mentioned that in the past some African leaders have appealed to ethnic sentiments to justify their positions, as well as to "politicise" Africans along their ethnic origins. For example, Chief Gatsha Buthelezi, the President of the IFP has managed to build and sustain his political party by capitalising on ethnicity.

House of Assembly), one for Coloureds (the House of Representatives), and one for Indians (the House of Delegates). The African section of the population was not represented in the tricameral parliament, and the people who supported the tricameral system always argued that the political needs of the African population were met through the Homeland Government and the Urban Community Councils system. Yet the wave of protest which always characterised elections for Community Councils challenged their alleged popularity among urban Blacks.

The general lack of support for the tricameral parliament, the Urban Community Councils and the homeland system was over the years demonstrated by growing levels of social unrest, particularly among Africans as they remained the only ones who were effectively disenfranchised. African leaders insisted that a genuine process of negotiations between the regime and the recognised leaders of all race groups was necessary to stem violence.

The dissolution of the tricameral parliament in August 1989 was a welcome development even though it did nothing to improve the situation of Africans who still remained without a political voice.

In October 1989, bowing to international pressure, the State President Mr F.W. de Klerk announced the release of seven jailed African National Congress (ANC) leaders and one Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) leader; and this was followed by the release of Nelson Mandela of the ANC in February 1990 and the unbanning of all the major political organisations. In the meantime the right wing opposition, the Conservative

Party (CP) along with the ultra-right organisation the Afrikaner Weerstandbeweging (AWB), strengthened their bases to resist a move that was seen to undermine White superiority status in the country. The unbanning of political organisations heralded the beginning of negotiations for a political settlement which culminated in the democratic elections in April 1994. The following account charts briefly the negotiation process which led to the elections, highlighting the obstacles with which all the parties involved have had to grapple.

In December 1991 negotiations for a new constitution for a future South Africa were set in motion at the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) which was held at the World Trade Centre in Johannesburg. Eighteen organisations comprising the ANC, the ruling National Party (NP), and four other parliamentary parties, all South African homeland administrations, the South African Communist Party, the Natal and the Transvaal Indian Congresses participated in the negotiations. At the beginning of the talks some organisations refused to participate. The most notable of these were the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO), the CP, and the PAC. The government had to hold bilateral meetings with each of these parties with the aim of involving them in the talks.

The negotiation process was very difficult as violence escalated throughout the negotiation period, especially among the African communities in the Reef and Natal. One of the high points of violence was the killing of 48 civilians in Boipatong township in the south of Johannesburg when hostel dwellers allegedly attacked township residents in June 1992. The ANC pulled out of negotiations temporarily as

a result of this, claiming that the police had deliberately allowed the killings to take place in an effort to destabilise the negotiations. The police were suspected to have colluded with the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) supporters who were believed to be behind the killings. In the wake of these events the UN Security Council was called in to mediate, and the ANC was persuaded to resume the negotiations. The National Peace Accord which had been set up at the beginning of the negotiations to monitor violence, was by this time considered unable to deal with it, and was at times accused of being biased.

The major political parties in the negotiation process, the ANC and the NP resumed talks having resolved their immediate differences through the Record of Understanding agreement[3]. The Record of Understanding angered the IFP and they pulled out of negotiations accusing the NP and the ANC of sidelining other negotiating partners. In particular, the IFP was angry with one clause in the agreement which stipulated the banning of traditional weapons and the fencing of migrant hostels.

The process leading to the first non-racial elections was on the whole very difficult and the existing peace remained fragile throughout. The period between 1992 and 1993 was particularly violent in South Africa. There were insinuations to the effect that the regime was resourcing hit-squads (mainly Black males) who were allegedly recruited from neighbouring countries to carry out vigilante attacks on progressive

[3] Among the issues the parties agreed on in the Record of Understanding was the banning of traditional weapons (carried by the Zulus), and the fencing up of migrant hostels. The hostels had come to be associated with violence as township residents and hostel dwellers continued to get involved in bloody clashes which almost always resulted in death.

elements, and in this way destabilise the process of negotiations and retard progress towards majority rule. There were also counter accusations as the Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA), the military wing of the PAC, claimed responsibility for attacks and murders of white citizens.

On April 27 1994 the ANC won the elections and became the main party among those which form part of the present day Government of National Unity (GNU) in South Africa. In the GNU any party which got 5 percent of the vote was given a seat in the Cabinet, and a party with 20 percent of the vote is entitled to an Executive Deputy President. Out of the 27 Cabinet posts six are held by the NP, three by the IFP and the ANC holds the rest. However, there are only two women Cabinet Ministers and two women Deputy Ministers in the present South African government.

The GNU is expected to be in power for five years after which period the party that will win the elections will become the government of the day. This five year period is generally regarded as the transitional period in South Africa, whereby the structures which will replace those of the apartheid era should be put firmly in place.

The main characteristic of the new South Africa was the reincorporation of the ex-homelands into South Africa and the redrawing of regional boundaries, with each of the nine provincial governments having its own premier (Fig 1). The main task facing the government is the implementation of its Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). The RDP has been adopted by the government as a policy framework of transforming apartheid structures, by among other things, alleviating

poverty, providing basic education for all, providing houses and creating jobs (Government of South Africa, 1994 (a)).

The RDP amongst other things commits itself to the building of a non-sexist society. This is indeed a fundamental shift because for the first time gender equality and non-sexism have become the responsibility of the government. Whether the visions set out in the RDP and in a women's constitution are translated into reality will depend on resources which are allocated for programmes aimed at empowering women, and on sustained political will.

3.3. Education and Employment Situation in South Africa

Years of inequality in the provision of education in South Africa, with the most limited resources made available to Africans, have resulted in the highly skewed system which the new government will find very difficult to reverse. This has likewise negatively affected employment opportunities for the majority of South Africans. In this section I sketch out some aspects of the existing inequalities in the education system. Equity in the provision of education is one of the primary challenges facing the new government.

Recent years have witnessed some sharp increases in the expenditure on Black[4] education compared to White education. Between 1975 and 1985 real expenditure on African education increased at a rate of 15 percent annually compared to 9 percent for Coloureds, 7 percent for Indians and 3 percent for whites (Colclough and Pillay,

[4] Black is used here to refer to Africans, Coloureds and Indians

1994). These differentials have on the whole been sustained well into the 1990's.

The above mentioned educational expenditures and apparent progress within Black education should be viewed within a context, however. First, among Africans in particular, there exists a discrepancy between numbers of enrolled pupils and those who actually attend. For example, it is estimated that some violence-affected education circuits in Natal had more than half of the enrolled pupils missing school at any one extended period of time (Colclough and Pillay, 1994). Also, studies on rural education suggest that the level of attendance in rural schools operated by White farmers is largely low and irregular as farmers control the labour and movement of their servants, including children (Graaff, 1991).

Second, many of the figures on education are based on the census figures which evidence indicates that it underestimates the numbers of children out of school. Colclough and Pillay (1994) suggested that between 5 to 15 per cent of children between the ages of 6 and 15 are out school.

Third, despite the real increases in expenditure on African education which have taken place there remains considerable differences in the quality of resources available to different population groups (Table 3.3). The table illustrates that expenditures per white pupil were more than four times than that of African children.

The authors suggest that these differences were partly caused by lower pupil/teacher ratios in white schools, with the remaining disparity arising from teachers' salaries in

the latter which indicates the higher average qualifications and experience of teachers in white schools.

Table 3.3: Dimensions of Cost Differences in South African Schools and Colleges, 1992

	Recurrent Expenditure (R/millions)	Pupils	Unit Costs (Rands)	Pupil/ Teacher Ratio
Whites	4506	1 033 000	4362	17.9
Indians	923	256 800	3594	20.9
Coloureds	2396	880 800	2720	22.0
Africans	7753	8 113 100	956	39.1

Source: *Colclough and Pillay, 1994, p.53*

Therefore, differences in actual quality of education between the different racial groups still persist and will need much more revolutionary measures to redress.

The drop-out rate still remain very high among Africans. Only 13 percent of Africans who start school finish high school, and among those only 3 percent do well enough to gain university entrance (Africa Contemporary Record, 1988/89; Colclough and Pillay, 1994). This imbalance partly explains why the level of wage sector unemployment is still the highest among Africans, particularly women.

It has also been argued (Archer, 1990, *et al*) that the problem has been aggravated by the fact that South Africa's labour force has grown faster than has employment. It seems generally accepted that there are fewer wage jobs available annually than the number of school leavers. This has not only affected Africans, but many White South

Africans have for the first time become visible in the informal sector (The Star, 1992).

The provision of basic free, and compulsory education for all is considered to be central in ensuring that in the long term distribution of opportunities is more even than it has hitherto been (Pillay, 1991). This will not only be beneficial to individuals, but it will lead to a much needed accelerated economic growth.

Pillay (1991) highlights an urgent need to upgrade the skills of those who are already in employment. He suggests that the private sector will need to be more centrally involved than it has done before. The composition and content of post-secondary education also need to be transformed. An effort should be made to improve access of the previously disadvantaged groups such as blacks and women, and a shift should be made towards more provision of technical, professional and scientifically inclined subjects (Pillay, 1991; Colclough and Pillay, 1991; Government of South Africa, 1994(a)).

Education is one area in South Africa where racial inequalities outweigh gender ones. While segregation in all forms and levels of education have now been formally abolished, *de facto* segregation in previously "white-only" well resourced schools is still wide-spread. Considering this, the government should draw up a national strategy to eradicate the inequities, instead of leaving this responsibility to regional administrations.

3.4. Urbanisation Processes with Special Reference to Africans

South Africa is not only the most urbanised country in southern Africa, but projections suggest that urbanisation, particularly that of African South Africans, is increasing at a dramatic rate. Urban Foundation (1987) projections indicate that by the year 2010, South Africa's population will be about 60 million. Africans would comprise 80 percent of the total population, up from 72 per cent in 1980. The metropolitan areas are projected to grow by 300% to 26.8 million by the year 2010. By the year 2000 South Africa would have at least four major centres with populations of the size of the Witwatersrand, estimated at 4 million at the end of the 1980's, while the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging region alone would have risen to 12 million (Africa Contemporary Record, 1988-89).

This section examines the phenomenon of urbanisation in South Africa over the past few years, and the effects this has had on the poverty levels of urban Africans, on the changes in urban household form, and the accompanying survival strategies of urban Africans[5].

Numerous writers in the last two decades documented the ever-increasing levels of poverty and the declining quality of life in the rural areas, particularly those of the South African homelands. They (e.g. Nattrass and May, 1986; Derman and Poultney,

[5] The unique and peculiar way in which the urbanisation processes in South Africa have evolved, though fascinating will not be covered in any detail here as these already form the subject of much literature. The work of Hindson (1987), Tomlinson (1990); Lemon (1991); Swilling et al (1991), particularly the contributions by Posel, Mabin, and Davenport, to name just a few, have done much to chart the changing urbanisation processes and policies in South Africa at various points in time, and from varying theoretical and analytical dimensions.

1983) argued that deteriorating agricultural production largely undermined the ability of the homelands to provide subsistence incomes for rural families. They suggested that the situation had resulted in large scale rural-to-urban migration, with women joining the large troops of men who work as migrant labourers in urban areas.

In the context of diminishing rural livelihoods women have become a sizeable proportion of migrants being forced to seek employment in the cities. For example, in 1985 a survey conducted by the Rural Urban Studies Unit (University of Natal) in Kwa-Zulu (one of the then homelands) found a female absentee rate of 15,3 percent. For South Africa as a whole Nattrass (1988) estimated that women formed 19 percent of the migrant labour force living in urban areas.

May (1990) suggests that this process was aided by the relative decline in the social and economic costs of living permanently in the urban areas compared to the countryside, as well as the relaxation of certain measures controlling the rate of African urbanisation, particularly the ending of influx control in 1986. The Urban Foundation (1987) noted that as a result of the scrapping of the influx control, the urban African population for the first time exceeded that of the rural African population (Africa Contemporary Record, 1988-89, p.b699)

This accelerating urbanisation has had far reaching consequences for the infrastructure of apartheid cities, and is of even more crucial significance to the general welfare of low-income urban Africans. This for instance meant increasing rates of sub-letting and squatter settlements, diminishing employment opportunities, increasing poverty among

both migrants and urban people. All these factors have contributed to the breakdown of families both in rural areas and in cities. The general consensus is that the housing and general infrastructural problems faced by the poor in South African cities were a result of the apartheid government's deliberate policy to discriminate against blacks and the poor (Parnell, 1992; Tomlinson, 1990).

The unwillingness of the apartheid state to provide sufficient accommodation in line with increasing urbanisation, and its policy of excluding "illegals" from official tenancy in formal townships increasingly forced people to build for themselves, and the poverty of the majority meant that the types of accommodation built was highly inadequate (Mabin, 1992, p.19).

Following the Riekert Commission (1978)[6] there were major changes which affected housing policy in South Africa (Parnell and Pirie, 1991). In line with the recognition and acceptance of African permanence in cities, private home ownership was encouraged. In a move that changed the landscape of Soweto, in 1983 the State announced its intention to sell the bulk of its rented homes. Approximately 100,000 houses were initially available for sale and most of them were in the African townships (Parnell and Pirie, 1991).

The sale of houses was slow at first particularly in African townships as they were

[6]The Riekert Commission, among other things, concluded that Africans contribute crucially to the white urban economy and therefore Riekert recommended changes in influx control and the ending of job reservation, and suggested that the state should foster rather than repress the African middle class

"too expensive" for the majority of the poor Africans. Those who might have been able to afford them were discouraged by the terms which, for Africans, featured 99-year leasehold and were not based upon freehold occupancy. But more significantly, there was a general feeling of resistance based on the argument that it was not fair for people to buy homes whose initial cost had already been covered through years of rental payments (Parnell and Pirie, 1991). Among Africans only a handful, specifically the petit-bourgeoisie and professional people benefited from the somewhat changed housing policies of the 1980s.

The deracialising of white collar and professional occupations at the behest of both the Riekert Commission and the increased adherence to the Sullivan Code, meant that some middle class Africans managed to extend and renovate their original houses, or moved to the newly constructed ones in the new smarter sections of the townships.

The majority of the poor Africans however still continue to live in conditions of extreme overcrowding either in the old townships, in informal settlements, or in high density inner city districts of major metropolitan areas.

Another consequence of urbanisation has been an increase in the incidence of female-headed households. For a woman who has just moved to the city for work purposes, residing on her own (often having a "visiting type" relationship with a man) seems to be both pragmatic and economical. A recent report (Government of South Africa, 1994(b)) suggests that while there is still a larger proportion of female-headed households in the rural areas, these are on the increase in the cities, particularly among

Africans.

A significant number of African households in urban areas are low income households. A combination of reasons (one already cited being poor access to formal education, especially at higher levels) is responsible for this. The levels of poverty have been said to be particularly high among those households headed by women (Government of South Africa, 1994(b)). The most obvious reason for this is that the formal labour market has been unable to absorb all women (urban-born and the newly urbanised) who have found themselves having to provide economically and single-handedly for their families and, of course, many of them would have been unable to take such jobs, even if available, because of child-care responsibilities. Many of these women have been forced to join the urban informal sector.

While some material has been written about the situation faced by women in the informal sector employment in general (see Rogerson, 1982), not much has been written about those women in the informal sector who head their own households. This study will attempt to focus on this specific group of women involved in informal sector "employment". However, it is fitting at first to briefly examine how the changing policy climate affected the informal sector in South Africa and the position in general of women within the sector.

3.5. Women in the Urban Informal Sector in South Africa

Up to the mid-1980s the official attitude in South Africa towards the informal sector was generally hostile. It was believed that encouraging the growth of the sector would

be counter-productive because it "would accelerate rural-urban migration, over-burden the public services and compound the social and health problems associated with the informal sector" (Nattrass, 1990, p.218).

However, from the mid-1980's onwards a shift in policy towards the sector was noticeable with acceptance or even encouragement of the growth of the informal sector. Institutions such as the Urban Foundation and the Small Business Development Corporation (SBDC) that had specifically been channelling resources to small scale (but formal) business began supporting a number of informal sector initiatives as well.

The recognition of African urbanisation as a permanent phenomenon and the issue of increasing African unemployment as a pressing political problem seem to have played a major role in transforming official attitudes towards the informal sector (Rogerson and Hart, 1989). The problem with this latest trend of over-emphasising the potential of the informal sector to create wide-scale employment and alleviate general unemployment problems is that it relieves the State of its responsibility to supply conditions necessary to reproduce labour, which is essential for the survival of the economy. The underlying implication of this view, therefore, is that the unemployed who have not been absorbed by the formal sector and still are not involved in the informal sector are regarded as voluntarily unemployed. There is an obvious problem with this view as Nattrass (1990 p.220) noted that those

> "eking out a living in the informal sector as a last-ditch survival strategy are regarded as 'employed', self sufficient and outside the bounds of state welfare responsibility".

What can be noted with numerous informal sector studies in South Africa is the

constant agreement on the very low earnings generated by the sector. A study by Beavon and Rogerson (1982), for example, found that only a small minority of informal sector operators reported incomes that were higher than the lowest paid employees in the formal sector. Further, a survey of the informal sector that was undertaken in Clermont and Inanda (in Natal) by Nattrass and Glass (1986), found that half of the informal sector operators who were sampled earned less than R100.00 per month and only 2 per cent were earning over R800.00.

The most numerically significant component of South Africa's urban informal sector economy are street traders who are mainly women. Petty-commodity production such as hawking has very limited potential for expansion and is in most cases undertaken as a survival strategy in the face of large-scale unemployment and as a means of supplementing meagre formal sector wages.

Further, a range of negative factors combine to make the position of female informal sector operators a difficult one. Factors such as women's additional roles of child-care and home management, poorer education compared to their male counter-parts, and their cultural positioning as subordinate to men simultaneously operate to inhibit women's optimal participation in informal sector activities. To make matters worse, their access to credit facilities is highly limited, particularly for married women and *de facto* female heads of households. This is because the law and society classify such women as dependants of their partners, and therefore not eligible for credit in their own right.

In conclusion, most people (particularly women) who continue to operate in petty-commodity production, only do so in the total absence of other workable alternatives. While these women garner some income, it should be realised that the conditions within which they operate are largely unprotected, making them more insecure and vulnerable than people who are employed in the formal labour market.

3.6. Soweto within South Africa: A Brief Overview

Soweto, short for South Western Townships, is a conglomeration of townships inhabited solely by members of the African population. The location was classified as such by the now repealed Population Registration Act of 1950. It is situated some fifteen to twenty kilometres south-west of Johannesburg. At its formation, Soweto was administered by the Johannesburg City Council and was one distinct geographical area. However, in 1973 when the West Rand Administration Board took over the administration of Soweto from the Johannesburg City Council, two additional adjacent townships were incorporated into it, namely Dobsonville and Diepmeadow, forming what came to be known as Greater Soweto.

3.6.1 The Making of Soweto: Its Relationship to Johannesburg: A Historical Review

The city of Johannesburg, also known as *"Egoli"* (the city of gold), was founded in 1886 when gold was discovered in the Reef. The discovery of gold led to wide scale migration of the previously rural population into the area. The first settlers of Johannesburg were mainly white though they brought with them members of different African population groups whom they employed as labourers and/or domestic servants.

However, as demand for cheap African mining labour increased, as well as continued proletarianisation of African farmers, there was massive increase in migration to Johannesburg to seek wage employment. For instance, Morris (1989) reports that the first Johannesburg census conducted in 1896 revealed that among a total population of 102 000, 50% were African. Similarly, Edelstein (1972) notes that by the year 1900, there were approximately 60 000 members of different African ethnic groups in the area.

The majority of black inhabitants were temporary contract workers employed by the mines and housed in mine compounds (Morris, 1981). However, with the growth of Johannesburg, black people began to find alternative employment. Many took up employment as domestic servants, while others became involved in the rapidly growing industrial sector. Although some domestic servants lived on the premises of their employers, and while hostel accommodation was provided for municipal employees and for employees of some private industrial concerns, the majority of black people were left to find their own accommodation in areas near their places of work (Morris, 1981). Although various suburbs were set aside for the different race groups, initially at least, racial separation was not enforced. As a result, racially mixed communities developed in places such as Vrededorp, the Malay Town, and Burghersdorp. These areas were all situated around central Johannesburg.

In 1897 a new Town Council was nominated to carry out the administrative functions of the Transvaal. The nominated Council functioned until the end of 1903 when thirty representatives were elected to replace those who had been nominated (Kagan, 1978).

Only Whites had the right to vote for members of this body. This Council, then known as the Johannesburg Town Council, had the power to impose rates and to formulate regulations for all people in and around the Johannesburg area. In addition, the administration of black areas was the responsibility of the Johannesburg City Council, subject to the control of the Central Government. Thus, the black population was represented by white people in the Johannesburg City Council.

In 1903, the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme was established by the Johannesburg City Council. Its primary purpose was to investigate the living conditions of black inhabitants in areas around central Johannesburg. The findings of the Commission drew attention to the poor living conditions of black inhabitants in areas which by now had developed into slums (Morris, 1981). Although most areas were not fit for human occupation, no alternative accommodation was made available at that time.

When in 1904 the plague broke out, and as a result of the findings of the Commission, which among other things highlighted the health hazard of the area, the Johannesburg City Council provided alternative accommodation for the black inhabitants who had been living in the slum areas around central Johannesburg. Thus temporary corrugated iron shelters were erected on municipal land adjacent to the sewerage disposal works, 15 kilometres south-west of central Johannesburg, and a year later a settlement called Klipspruit was erected in the same area. Black inhabitants from overcrowded slum areas near the centre of Johannesburg were then compelled to move to Klipspruit. Yet, because of the inadequate transport system between Johannesburg and Klipspruit the

majority of people continued to seek accommodation in central Johannesburg since it was nearer to their places of work. Consequently, the number of shacks in properties owned by whites in central Johannesburg increased in order to accommodate the homeless Africans (Morris, 1981).

Having established Klipspruit in 1904, virtually no further attempt was made by the Johannesburg Town Council to address the housing problem faced by blacks. Morris (1981) has speculated that this might have been caused by the fact that at this time there was still no separate department responsible for handling the housing difficulties faced by the growing African population.

The Urban Areas Act No 21 of 1923 represented the first planned attempt to resolve the accommodation problems of African people who lived and worked within the Johannesburg area (Lewis, 1969). The Act officially placed responsibility for the provision of housing for blacks on Local Authorities. As a result of this legislative measure, a municipal Department of Native Affairs was established in 1927 (Morris, 1981). A year later a Council Committee of Native Affairs was appointed. The principal function of this body was to provide housing for black inhabitants. As a result of this Committee's recommendations, an additional 1 300 morgen of land on the farm of Klipspruit was incorporated into the area on which corrugated iron shelters had been erected in 1904.

Besides the new shelters in Klipspruit, houses were also to be built in an area today known as Orlando East. (See Sub-section 3.3 in this chapter for the history of Orlando

East). Here the Johannesburg City Council planned to accommodate 80 000 people and to provide shopping and other community facilities required by the population of that size (Morris, 1981). Between 1930 and 1939, the Johannesburg City Council had built 5,891 houses in Orlando East (Edelstein, 1972). Orlando East was initially shunned by Africans who preferred to live in the more vibrant inner-city slums, rather than be subject to strict controls in the locations (Beavon, 1995). But with increasing accommodation problems partly caused by the eviction of blacks from central Johannesburg, Orlando East was soon overpopulated, and the squatter settlements developed in the vicinity surrounding it. Orlando East has been dubbed as the first township in Soweto, because in essence it represented the first planned effort to provide houses for Africans as a permanent measure.

When the Second World War began in 1939 South African manpower and materials were increasingly channelled towards war efforts. This resulted in a virtual halt in the building of houses (Lewis, 1969). In the meantime large-scale industrial development on the Reef region was causing a phenomenal influx of Africans to the area. It has also been suggested that the unexpected influx of Africans to the Reef area during the war years resulted from false rumours that the Johannesburg municipality was giving Black migrants places to build their own homes (Beavon, 1995). Between 1936 and 1946, the total African population in Johannesburg grew from 229 122 to 370 972, with most of the increase occurring after the war broke out (Morris, 1981).

Consequently, many tenants began sharing their limited accommodation with other families (Lewis, 1969). It has been estimated that during 1940, there were

approximately 8 000 unregistered sub-tenants in Orlando East alone. Due to excessive overcrowding these backyard shacks created inevitable health hazards.

During this period various temporary measures which aimed at alleviating the accommodation crisis were introduced. In 1944 the Johannesburg City Council was pressurised into erecting 4 042 temporary breeze block shelters on land adjacent to Orlando East. This area which became known as Shantytown was later demolished and today Orlando West stands in its place. Since then a total of 24 townships have been built in a piecemeal fashion to constitute what is known as Soweto (Fig.3.2 and 3.3)[7].

[7]The maps of Soweto and Greater Soweto used here depict the township boundaries as they were before being redrawn late last year, 1994. The functioning and naming of the new municipalities will only be formalised after the local authority elections in October 1995 (Beavon, 1995). Therefore, they are not considered here.

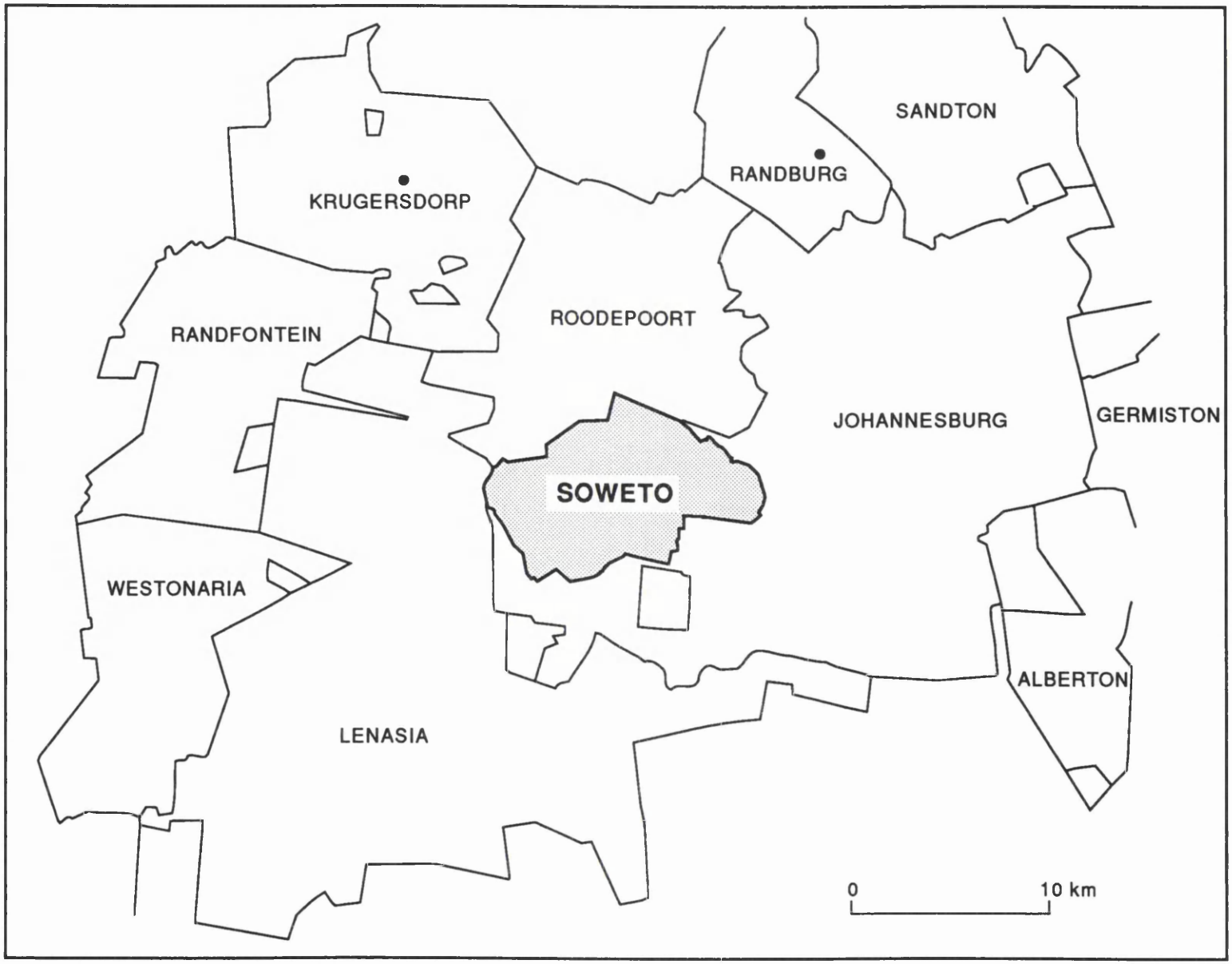


Fig. 3.2: Soweto in Context

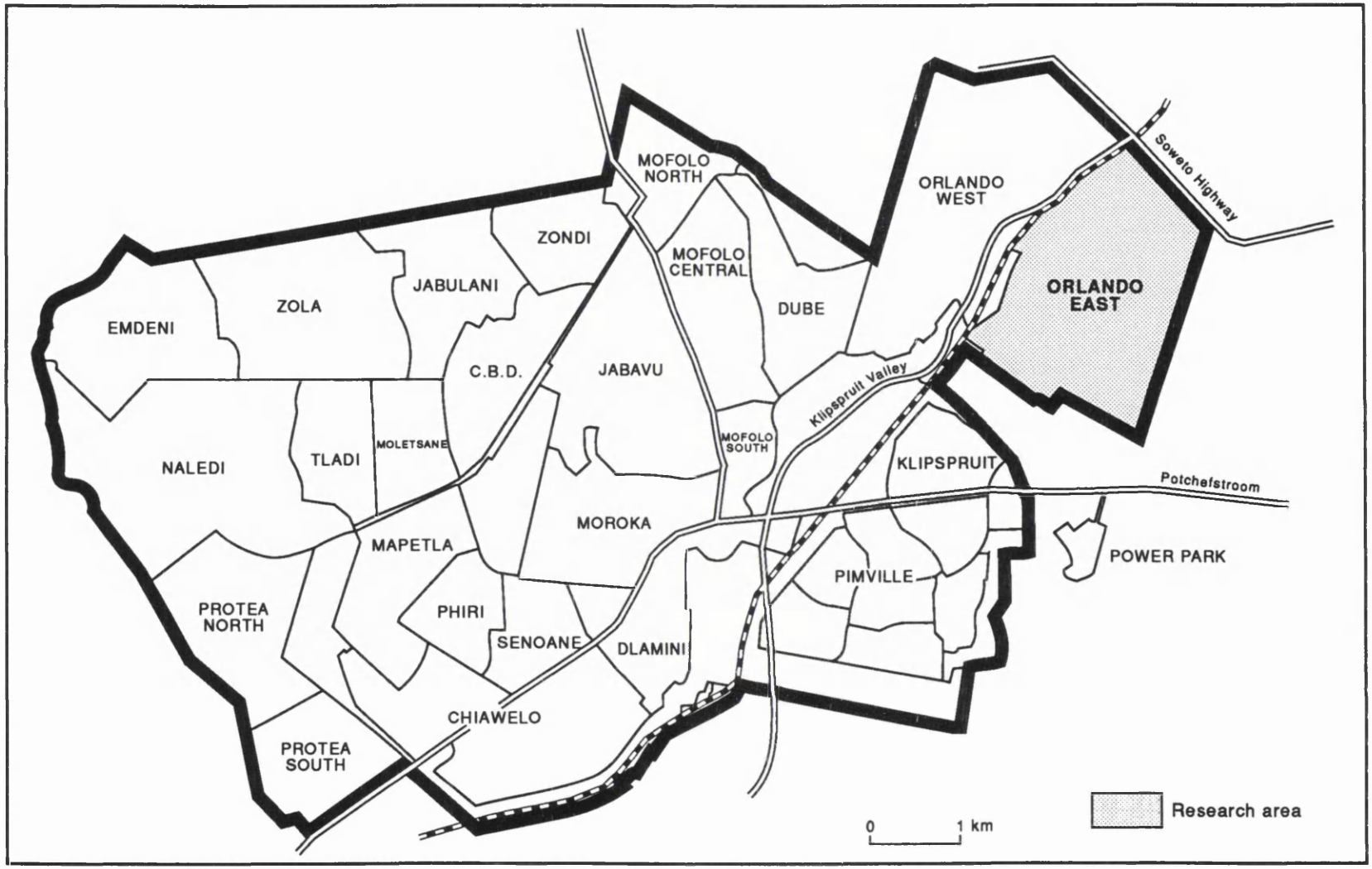


Fig. 3.3: Soweto

3.6.2 Soweto Today: Key Issues

In this sub-section only those aspects of Soweto and Sowetans which have a direct bearing on the present study will be emphasised. The purpose of this sub-section is to familiarise the reader with relevant current socio-economic and demographic aspects of Soweto.

Soweto is the largest urban black township in South Africa today, and is the largest part of what has come to be known as Greater Soweto (Fig.3.4). Greater Soweto became fully autonomous under three local authorities in 1986, Municipal Soweto comprising about 70 percent of the total population, Diepmeadow comprising 25 percent and Dobsonville approximately 5 percent.

Soweto is very diversified ethnically. When the National Party came into power in 1948, the allocation of residential areas was done along ethnic lines, so that one found pockets in various townships which were (and still are) referred to as either Zulu or Sotho sections. Nevertheless the social interdependence is such that today a sort of lingua-franca has evolved which embraces so many components of the seven or so ethnic languages that its speakers cannot legitimately agree on its ethnic lineage. Besides, many Sowetans tended to resist the ethnic stereotypes which they considered as part of the "divide-and-rule" strategy of the government of the day.

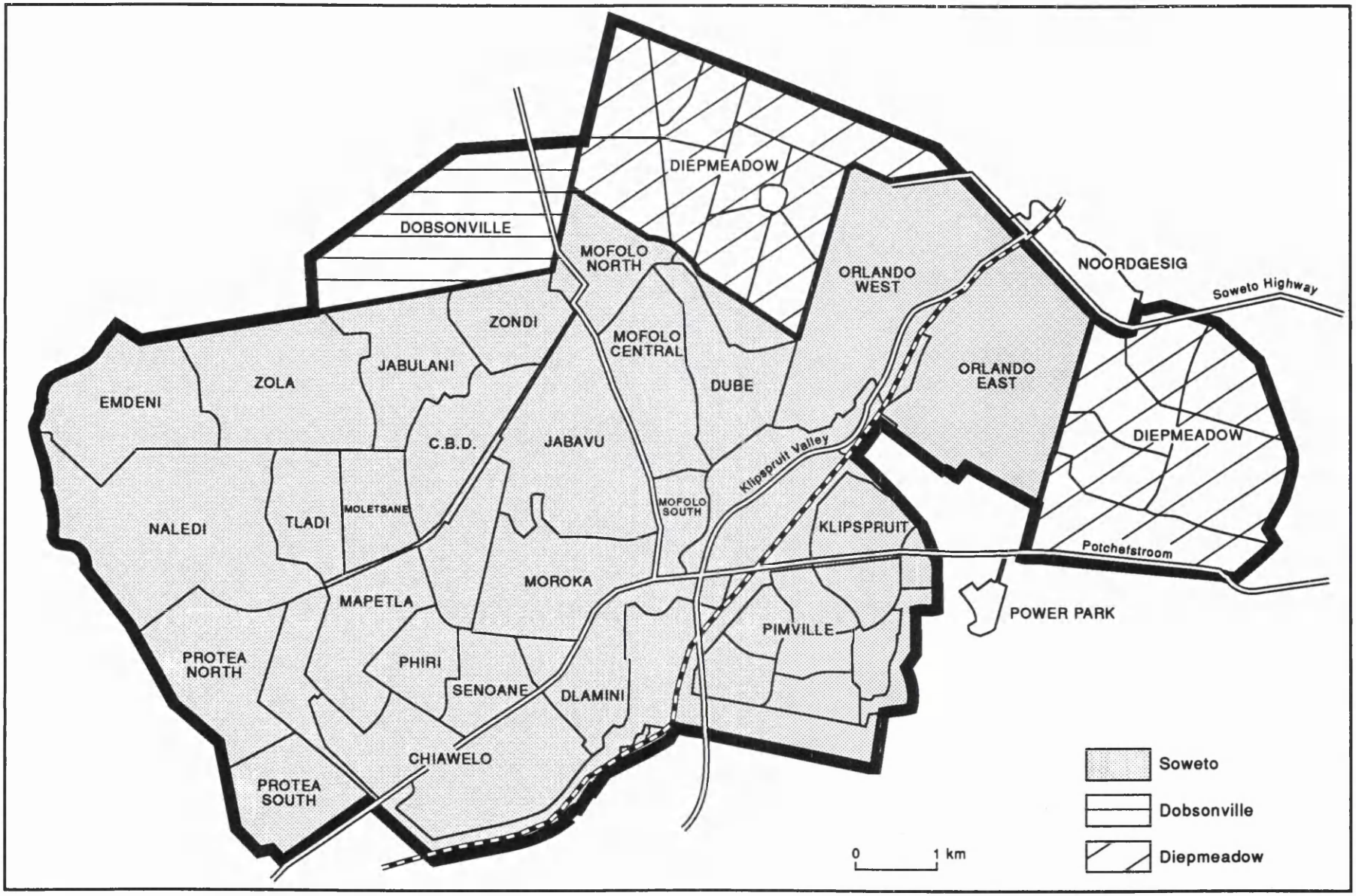


Fig. 3.4: Greater Soweto

Since Sowetans got permission to purchase houses, and due to secular movements within the townships, ethnically-aligned residential areas are being eroded. Zulu is the most widely spoken language in Soweto, reflecting the situation in the rest of South Africa. A typical Sowetan is, however, fluent in most African languages of South Africa.

The bulk of Soweto's population is employed in Johannesburg. It has been estimated that approximately 95% of the workforce travel daily to Johannesburg. However, with the impressive growth of the transport (notably, taxi) industry in Soweto, access to places of employment has become much easier. As a result, cities like Roodepoort, Randburg, etc. are easier to get to, and this has diversified the flow of the workforce to other areas besides main Johannesburg. Further, later initiatives to create commercial and industrial outlets, through the activities of agencies like the Small Business Development Corporation, the Industrial Parks, Urban Foundation, etc. mean that many more people are now employed in schemes within Soweto. However, accelerated immigration and overcrowding in Soweto has meant that even the rapid transport growth which has occurred has not been sufficient to meet demand, and transport problems remain a key aspect in the frustrations of life faced by Sowetans daily (Khosa, 1992).

The majority of houses in Soweto are of a standard design and size, consisting of three- and four-roomed dwellings, and sometimes two-rooms (in the case of Jabavu, Orlando East and Naledi). However, in more recent years new townships have been developed by both the public and private sectors through employer involvement and

self-help schemes. Consequently, block of flats and a variety of houses anywhere between large double-storey dwellings with double garages and swimming pools and neat compact suburban dwellings can be seen in Soweto. Further, a number of the original matchboxes have been greatly improved through individual initiative so that the depressing monotony of the past is now less severe.

At the time of the 1980 census the population density stood at 100 persons per square hectare, and it is now definitely higher with the abolition of influx control in 1986. Further, the subsequent construction of shacks on approximately one-third of the sites in Soweto, and the establishment of shack settlements, means that the overall picture is one of overcrowding and an inadequate environment in general infrastructure. Table 3.4 depicts the housing conditions in Greater Soweto in 1991.

Table 3.4: Housing Conditions in Greater Soweto, 1991

Number of Formal Units	102 000
Number of Occupants per Unit	10
Number of Shacks	50812
Number of Occupants per Shack	8-10
Number of Hostels	12
Total Beds	39 000
Units Owned	77 953
Units Rented	66 958
Rentals (Per Month)	R55

Source: *Adapted from Township Annual (1992)*

A combination of socio-economic factors such as poor educational attainment and general concentration of residents in blue-collar low-paying jobs has further exacerbated the situation. It is estimated that nearly two-thirds of African households

have no money left after meeting the basic cost of food, transport, education and health care, to invest in the purchase of their own houses however simple in structure (Township Annual, 1992). Notwithstanding the fact that there is general agreement on the urgency to meet the housing needs of the very poor, many of the housing projects targeting low-income households, are still unaffordable for their target population.

Soweto's socio-economic profile reflects high levels of poverty. The Development Bank of South Africa (DBSA, 1989) estimated that unemployment in Soweto between 1984 and 1986 was close to 53 percent. The average monthly household income in 1987 was 819 rands, a figure only slightly above the minimum living level of 809 rands (SAIRR, 1990).

It should be highlighted however that the grim picture which has just been painted does not include the middle income Africans, who constitute mainly the business people and the professionals of Soweto. Despite the fact that this group is a very small percentage of the population, their lifestyle and standard of living is quite distinct from that of other Sowetans.

3.7. Orlando East

The above discussion of South African townships and of Soweto in particular is also applicable to the analysis of Orlando East as it is an integral part of Soweto. In fact Sowetans largely view themselves as such and the distinction by actual place of residence is considered less significant. This could be because the living conditions of Sowetans are more or less similar. This of course, excludes a few new up-market

areas such as Protea North and Diepkloof Extension where a very small percentage of well-to-do Sowetans mentioned above live.

In this short subsection I will discuss only those characteristics of Orlando East which set it apart from other Soweto townships, and which therefore made Orlando East an appropriate site for the present study.

Orlando East is a settlement with just over 6000 formal households. The township was first laid out in the late 1920's, and was built from the beginning of the 1930's. Orlando was built for Africans who were to be moved from slums in central Johannesburg and other informal settlements which had mushroomed all over the Witwatersrand region as a result of accommodation shortage for African labourers. Though Orlando East was not the very first residential area set aside for Africans in that period, as Klipspruit was already in place, it represented the first planned effort by the authorities to provide accommodation for Africans who had residential and employment rights in and around Johannesburg.

The population of Orlando is very mixed both in terms of its age and its ethnic composition. The former owes much to it being the oldest township in Soweto, and therefore it has the oldest residents who had come to work on the Reef in the 1920s and early 1930s. The latter factor is most probably due to the fact that Orlando East was built in the 1930s prior to the Nationalist Party 1948 takeover of the government, and the introduction of residential planning of townships along ethnic lines.

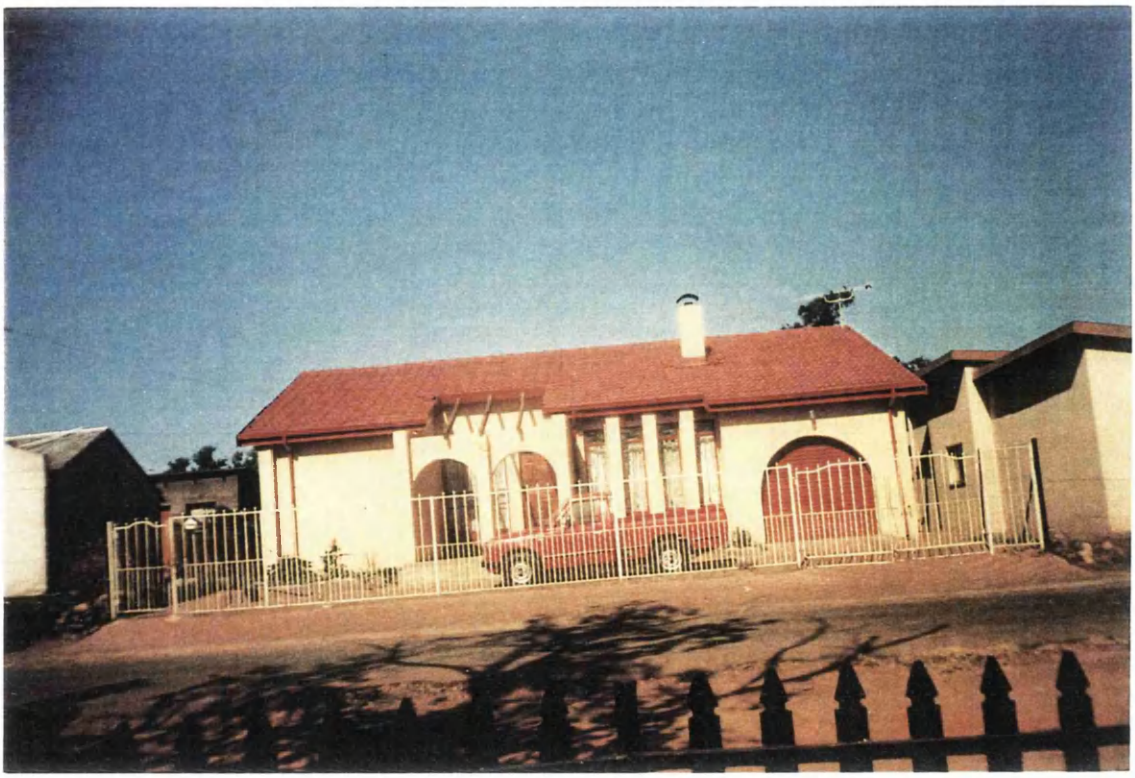
The age of the population meant that in Orlando I was in a position to meet and speak to the oldest residents of Soweto who had come to work in Johannesburg at the turn of the century. The experiences of the old proved valuable as the history of Sowetans is not systematically recorded. With regard to ethnic composition, I thought it was better to study the community which has always been mixed ethnically, thus reflecting the cross-section of the Sowetans and eliminating a possible bias by concentrating on either predominantly Nguni or Sotho speaking townships.

Another distinctive characteristic of Orlando East is that few of the original inhabitants of this township have moved, either to different parts of Soweto or to other African townships on the Reef. Where some members have moved, the family often retains the house, so that in a number of cases it is common to find third generation householders still residing in the original "family house".[8] According to Orlando residents the reasons for this are two-fold. The first is that Orlando East happens to be nearest to the Johannesburg city centre, thus making travel to and from places of employment convenient. Second, the sites of Orlando are much bigger than those of other townships which were built from the 1940s onwards. The latter has enabled a few wealthier families to extend their homes without bothering about problems of space experienced in other townships (Fig 3.5), and the poorer ones to erect backyard shacks and back rooms which they either rent out to destitute families (often newly

[8]It is common in Orlando to hear of people referring to the "family house". What this essentially denotes is the fact that the house belongs to the parents or grandparents of household members, and no-one as a result is supposed to lay claims on it. This often leads to inevitable squabbles among the grown-up and often married siblings as to who has the right to inheritance of the house. Women are at a particular disadvantage as they are not expected to lay any claims to the house irrespective of the central economic roles which they often play in poorer households.

urbanised) and/or use as extra accommodation for younger household members. Fig 3.6 is a typical Orlando East site with shacks all around the main house.

Fig.3.5.: One of the Few Extended Houses in Orlando East (front and side view)



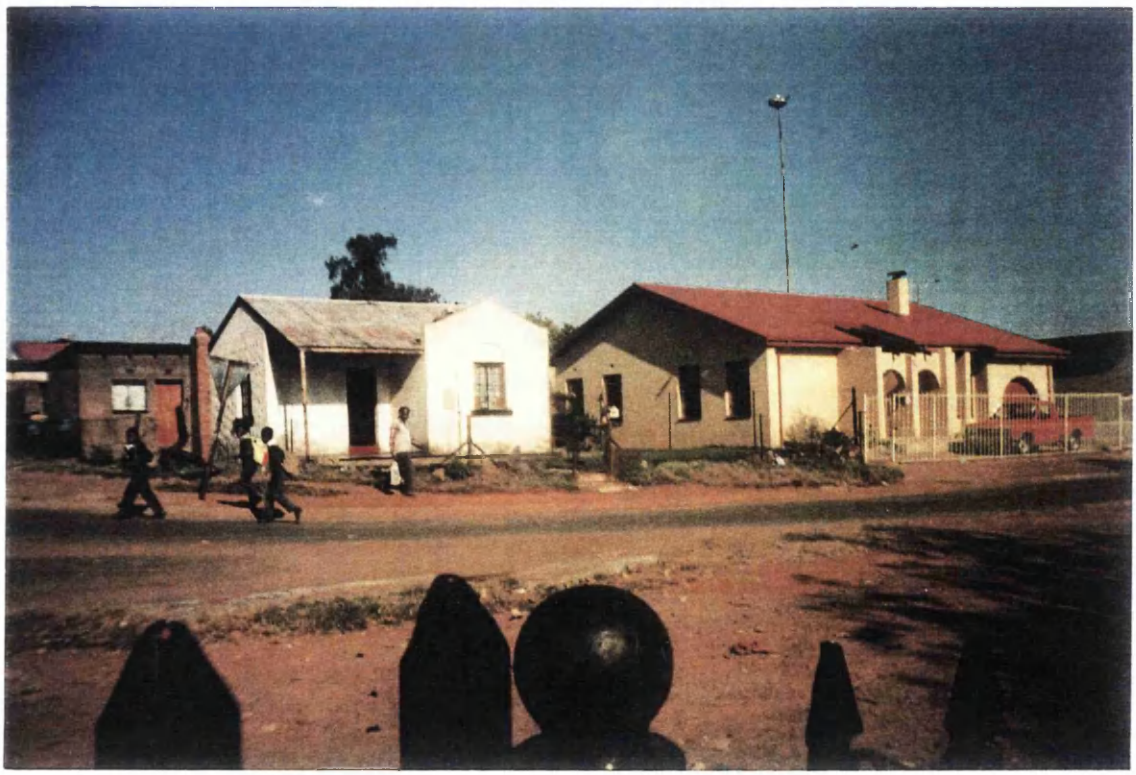
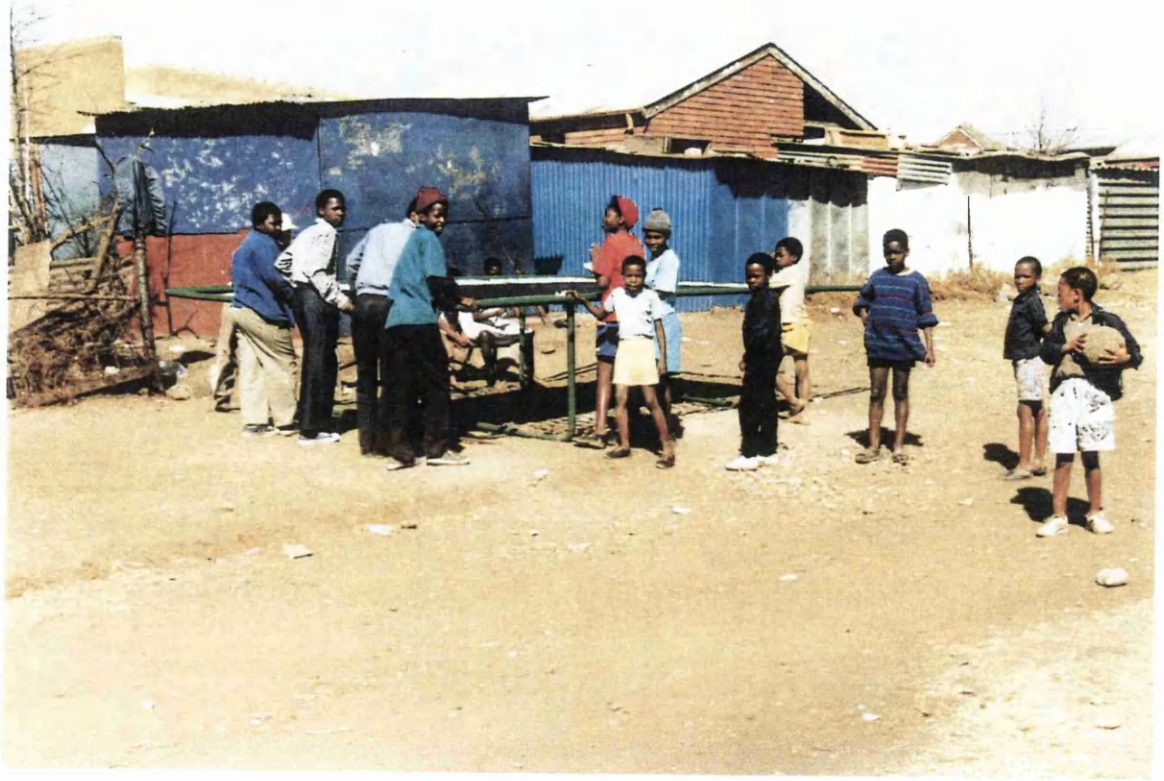


Fig.3.6.: Main (Municipal) House surrounded by shacks



With a largely blue-collar working class background, only a few Orlando East residents have tertiary education. Educational opportunities and attainment often run within a few families whose forebears were in white collar jobs mainly as teachers, nurses and the clergy in the 1920s and 1930s.

The houses of Orlando East are two- and three-roomed tiny structures with multi-coloured corrugated-iron roofing and small verandas (Fig. 3.7 a and b). In a number of houses the verandah has been converted into an extra room by closing it up with pieces of corrugated iron (Fig 3.8). A common feature of all houses is that a few yards from each house is a backyard toilet separated by a wall from that of a neighbour. The only water supply is through a tap attached to one of the walls of the backyard toilet.

Fig.3.7(a): Unaltered Two-Room House

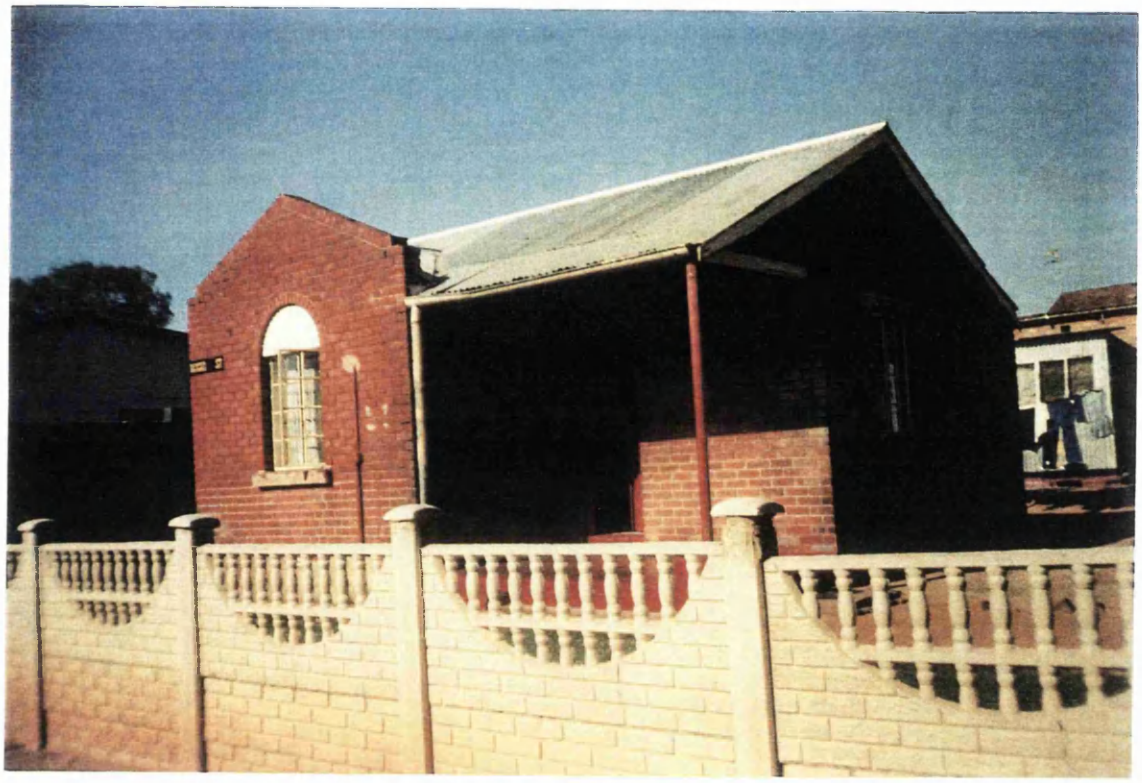


Fig.3.7(b): Unaltered Three-Room House

Fig.3.8: Examples of Houses with a Converted Verandah

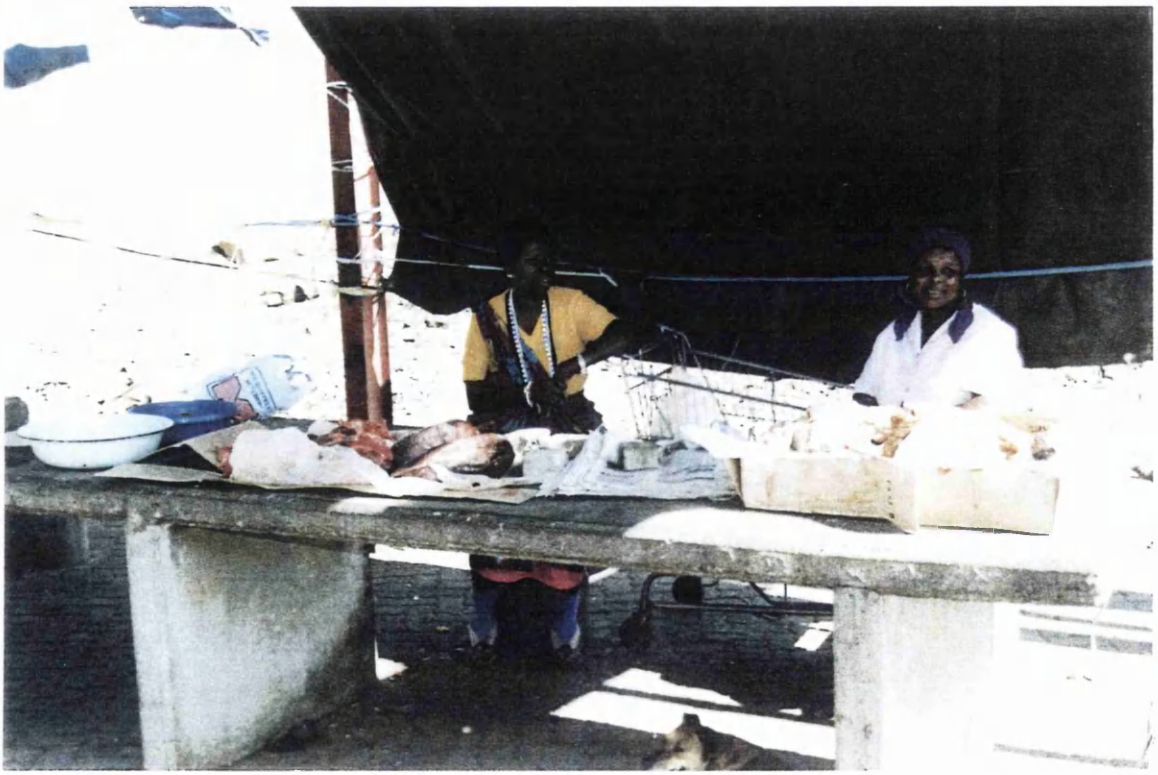
The general picture in Orlando East, as in the rest of Soweto, is that of overcrowding as the occupancy per dwelling is estimated in the range of seven to fourteen (Sikakane, 1977; Beavon, 1995). In a number of homes the kitchen and the living rooms are converted into bedrooms at night. A few families have managed to make extensions on their homes so that the monotony is less severe with occasional "big houses" in the midst of uniform council houses (Fig 3.5). The house extensions are however an exception rather than the rule.

With high levels of unemployment not only in Orlando, but in the rest of Soweto, the township has become a breeding hole for crime and gangland culture. Though Orlando residents are less than candid in discussing the topic, my observation was that the crime rate has increased with diminishing employment opportunities. A number of families survive solely on the criminal activities of their members, ranging from petty theft to well organised drug dealing, car thefts and armed robberies.

Almost all unemployed women are involved in some form of informal sector activity. Almost 90% of all women interviewed for the present study were regular informal sector operators. Their operations varied widely and included such activities as the sale of fruits and vegetables, home food production, *spaza* shop ownership, dress-making, soft good trade, child-minding, shebeneering, etc (Fig.3.9).

Fig.3.9. Examples of Informal Sector Activities in Orlando East

(a) Fruit and vegetable market



(b) Food/meat traders

Fig.3.9: Examples of Informal Sector Activities in Orlando East (continued)

(c) Soft Goods Traders

(d) Pre-school (i.e. child-minding)

Most of these activities cater purely for the "bread and butter" needs of households, as most have little chance of expansion to even what can be classified as small businesses. Petty commodity producers often operate with very little capital, and what little profit (if any) that is generated is channelled into daily household needs.

On the positive side, Orlando East is a very closely-knit community where families know and relate to one another. The element of closeness is demonstrated by the existence of a number of community structures such as self-help groups, burial societies, mothers' unions, etc, all with the emphasis on mutual support (detailed in Chapter 5). Even the very poor households are involved in these neighbourhood groups as long as they can afford the minimal contributions. For many poor families in Orlando East these "societies" are the only way they can save for burial of their dead relatives.

Very little recorded and coherent data exists on Orlando East. Most of the above account is based on my own observations during my six year community work in the township and during the ten months I spent there conducting this research. Other bits of information were gathered from the Johannesburg intermediate archives, Local Authority offices, as well as through tape-recorded discussions held with surviving senior citizens of Orlando East. The unavailability of coherent data on the lives of Orlando (even of Soweto) people points to the extent to which issues pertaining to the lives of ordinary low-income Africans as a special interest group have been marginalised in the literature.

3.8. Summary of Chapter Three

The main purpose of Chapter 3 was to familiarise the reader with historical and current trends in South Africa. Another aim was to situate Soweto within main Johannesburg and particularly to illuminate how the latter has influenced the growth and change of the former and vice-versa. Chapter 3 is divided into three distinct yet systematically related sections.

The first part of Chapter 3 started by looking at the population composition of South Africa, as well as its size and distribution. The main thrust of this section was its emphasis on the significance of race as a factor which has shaped the lives of South Africans. It was, amongst other things, highlighted that despite the political changes which have taken place in South Africa it is still impractical to analyze the South African situation without making any reference to the racial factor. The second sub-section gave a very brief overview of the South African political system, charting the processes and obstacles which have characterised the transition to the new democratic government.

The third subsection was a brief overview of education and employment situation in South Africa. It was argued that the inequalities in the education provision between Blacks and Whites still persist because of the backlog in the quality of education of non-whites which is reflected in the less than adequate training of teachers in the previously non-white schools. It was suggested that the disadvantaged position of non-whites, particularly Africans is reflected in their high unemployment levels compared with whites. It was pointed out that a more radical approach by the new government

is necessary to reverse the situation. This, it was argued, is necessary for the improvement of the overall economy of South Africa.

Section 3.4 charted briefly the changing urbanisation policies in South Africa and what impact these have had on the general welfare of Africans, and the extent to which they have been able to survive in cities in the face of diminishing employment opportunities and rising poverty levels both in rural and urban areas. Housing, unemployment and poverty were highlighted as the key problems facing low income urban Africans.

Finally subsection 3.5 discussed the changing policy towards the urban informal sector of South Africa. This section highlighted the preponderance of women in the urban informal sector, and emphasised the fact that women tend to engage in those activities which are not capable of growth. For many women, it was argued, petty-commodity production is not really a form of meaningful employment, but rather a survival strategy within the context of poverty and destitution.

The second major part of chapter 3 looked into the historical, spatial and economic relationship between Johannesburg and Soweto. The purpose of this section was to demonstrate how the growth and development of Soweto was influenced by the industrial growth of Johannesburg dating back to the discovery of gold on the Reef in 1886, and also to look at the current socio-economic conditions of Sowetans.

The final part took a closer look at Orlando East, the site where this study was

undertaken. This section, mainly based on the observations made during my research period in Orlando, and on the interviews with the township officials and senior residents (in the absence of any coherent documentation specific to Orlando East), tried to pull together important characteristics of Orlando East and why it was considered fitting as a site for this research.

The history, politics, and socio-economics of South Africa are extremely dynamic and unusual because of the apartheid legacy of that country. Capturing the full dynamics would have been impossible in this chapter. What chapter 3 has done however, is to bring out a general picture so that the findings of this study are placed within a context.

CHAPTER FOUR

MATERIAL WELL-BEING OF FEMALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS IN ORLANDO EAST

4.0. Introduction

Chapter Four considers the material well-being of female-headed households in Orlando East. The first section will briefly analyze the causal factors of female-headed households as perceived by Orlando East respondents. The second section will critically analyze data on the incidence of female-headed households in Orlando East and Soweto. The frameworks used in many official surveys to determine the scale of female-headed households in South Africa have tended to base their measures on titular headship (which is skewed towards male headship), thus underestimating the scale of female-headed households there. Through combining my own observations with scant secondary sources, an effort has been made to provide a useful portrayal of the incidence of female-headed households. Nevertheless, the scale and prevalence of female-headed households in South Africa still remain an important area requiring independent research.

The next two sections of Chapter 4 will be dedicated to assessing the socio-economic well-being of respondent households of Orlando East. Section 4.3 traces the sources of income of these households, while section 4.4 seeks to analyze their income levels. The next section will examine expenditure patterns of respondent households. Expenditure patterns are analyzed separately from income levels because measures of

consumption (indicated here by expenditure patterns) are a good indicator of the welfare level of the household. It is assumed that income by itself is not a decisive measure of welfare since not all income from every household member is used to contribute to the maximization of household welfare[1]. The SALDRU/World Bank (1994, p.iv) report supports the view that "where income data is unreliable, absent or incomplete, expenditure provides an alternative measure of household welfare." In this study variations in welfare levels of household members will be stressed, and therefore any reference to household welfare is made with due recognition of these intra-household differentials. Household welfare would thus generally refer to those whose well-being depend on jointly pooled incomes.

Finally, in determining how well these households cope with their supposedly meagre incomes, the last section will critically analyze the factors affecting expenditure choices and resource distribution within the household and how these affect and are affected by dependency ratios.

4.1 Causes of Female-Headed Households

This section draws largely on data from the questionnaires which included questions about the causes of female-headed households in Orlando East. It is generally agreed that female-headed households are on the rise in Soweto. Further, many studies on

[1]This practice was observed to be very much the case in Orlando East as I noted that some household members, usually young males, looked much wealthier than the rest of the family, and they enjoyed better lifestyles. Household members were generally reluctant to discuss the personal income of other members of the household, especially if that income had been earned through criminal activities. They were only content to account for income which was made available to the household for common consumption.

accelerating singlehood among African women agree that the perceived disadvantages of marriage, such as the inability of men to support their wives, have, in recent years, tended to outweigh its advantages, even when assessed among those who are currently married (see Wright, 1993, for example).

The reasons for being single given by the fifty respondents have been clustered in useful and comprehensible categories in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1 Causes of Single Status of Orlando Respondents by Age Group (N=50)

Age Group	Marital Status			
	Divorced (18%)	**Separated/ Deserted (26%)**	**Widowed (36%)**	**Never Married (20%)**
16-24				1
25-34				2
35-44	3	8	1	2
45-54	3	4	8	3
55+	3	1	9	2

Source: *Orlando East Survey Data, 1992-93*

Except in cases where the cause for singleness is widowhood, the underlying causes leading to single status among those who are either divorced, separated, deserted or never married were not readily clear from the semi-structured questionnaires. It was for this reason then that further questions were tabled within the context of oral testimonies to determine the underlying causes leading to the marital status specified. These will be elaborated upon in some detail in Chapter Eight when the data generated

by oral histories will be discussed.

It is recognised that the status of being single does not, by itself, qualify one to be the head of the household. The main criterion by which headship has been determined in this thesis are the *budgetary* and *organisational* responsibilities of the head. These (economic) indicators of headship were adopted because the issues of concern in this thesis revolve around economic wellbeing of female-headed households. In line with this conceptual viewpoint, Rosenhouse (1989) has advised that:

> "[i]f the concept of headship is to be policy relevant, indicators of headship should be constructed to reflect that aspect of the concept being examined. If economic support is in question, then headship should be measured in terms of economic contribution." (p.45)

This then implies that even those respondents who were in common-law relationships, after being divorced or separated, were regarded as heads of their households as long as they were chiefly responsible for budgetary and organisational tasks within their households. A similar conceptualization would have been used in cases where women were living with their husbands, as long as the latter were less responsible for household budgeting and daily organisation of the household than the woman designated as the head[2]. No such households were identified however. This conceptualisation necessarily departs from a more widely applied one whereby headship is largely determined by kin and/or gender with men often accorded headship

[2]This is not to imply that women household heads were necessarily the sole contributors to household budgets, but what this conceptualisation attempts to depict is women's responsibility for household sustenance, especially in periods of economic austerity. Put differently, according to this study's conceptualisation, inconsistent "responsibility" does not entail household headship.

status in both respects notwithstanding their actual roles within the household.

Table 4.1 shows that the largest single cause of singleness is widowhood[3], accounting for 36 percent of respondents. This finding is not surprising within a South African context where life expectancy among men is estimated at 61 years, while that of women is 67 years (Vale, 1992). The gap is believed to be even higher among the low-income groups. This figure is followed by 26 percent of respondents who are still officially married but live separately from their partners for various reasons. Those who have never married account for 20 percent of the respondents, while those divorced are 18 percent. It should be highlighted however, when trying to explain these patterns, that there are obvious difficulties in trying to associate a particular set of underlying causal factors with a specific marital status. In essence it was found that a set of causal factors was reported in almost all categories with differing frequency. For example, unreasonable spending patterns by males, infidelity and violence were reported in all categories as causes of marital breakdown.

The results do show that marriage, at least initially, is still considered to be important in this community, with 80 percent of the respondents having been married at one time or another in their lives (see also Wright, 1993 on Lesotho). On the other hand, the results also demonstrate that breakdown of marriages is the most widespread cause of singleness among Orlando East respondents. Amongst the 44 percent of the

[3]It is important to highlight here that at least seven of the widowed women were no longer living with their husbands by the time they were widowed. This further supports the contention that marriage breakdown is a very significant factor in causing single status.

respondents who are either divorced, separated or deserted, and the 20 percent who never married, there are distinct parallels in reasons given for the causes of their singleness. The most prevalent reasons cited were, first, "unreasonable" spending priorities among men in general; second, increasing inability of men to provide for household survival; third, infidelity coupled with violence towards partner and/or children; and finally, excessive alcohol intake. The reported reasons, which almost always operate simultaneously, are discussed in some detail below, both in the light of their application to the findings of previous similar studies, as well as their significance within an Orlando East context.

(i) Distinct male-female spending priorities:

Money management appeared to be central to household conflict which finally leads to marriage breakdown. Almost all respondents felt that the spending priorities of men were often incompatible with women's responsibilities for household reproduction. While the income generated by women was seen to be largely used for household consumption, the bulk of men's income was seen to be spent on acquiring status symbol items such as expensive radios, clothes and cars. This was confirmed by my own observations, as I noted that it is not uncommon in Orlando East to see an expensive car belonging to a household whose declared overall income is incongruent with the price of the car (see Footnote 1 above). Of course, other household members rarely enjoy the usage of the car which is regarded as not belonging to the whole family, but to its owner. *All* the divorced and separated women reported men's unreasonable spending priorities as a key reason for the breakdown of their marriage.

Closely related to the tendency of men to monopolise their personal income is their likelihood to seek control of women's income. One of the divorced respondents mentioned that she decided to seek a divorce because many unmarried women she knew seemed to enjoy relative freedom in deciding how to spend what they earned. Another one pointed out that women without husbands did not have to put up with augmenting the man's expenditure on items that were beyond household consumption. With but a few exceptions, the majority of divorced or separated women reported that they had initiated the split. While a small percentage of them felt that it would have been more desirable to stay married, they all thought that they were generally better-off materially than when they were married or living with their partners. This general feeling of being better-off should be considered within a context. It does not mean a sudden increase in household income, but reflects the relative freedom and independence with which these women are able to determine and control the use of meagre household resources. Put differently, the feeling of being well-off should be associated more with the perceived improved quality of life, than with material well-being.

The conflicts emanating from resource allocation mentioned above were not regarded by respondents as only specific to married relationships. Those female heads who were subsequently living with a male kin member found that in many cases individualistic resource utilization on the part of men was still a norm rather than an exception (see Chapter 6). This then means that males' relative lack of contribution to household budgets probably has less to do with the type of relationship (kin or affinal) with women than with their perceived relative freedom to spend their earnings as they see

fit (see also Elson, 1991).

(ii) Inability of men to support the household:

Traditionally, African men were charged with the responsibility for providing materially for the household, while women were expected to play a nurturing role. Yet the rise of unemployment in South African cities has meant that many males (and females) remain unemployed for long periods of time. This, as seen by women interviewed, is having a devastating effect on family life. Many women who resided with male kin reported that some male members of the household or ex-partners who had made contributions when they were employed, were subsequently unable to because they no longer had jobs. This failure to provide for the household was seen by men as causing an immense loss of power and respect within the household. One woman who had been divorced for five years reported that as soon as her ex-husband lost his means of earning, he took to more alcohol intake and was given to bouts of violence, which were directed towards her and their children. Another woman reported that there is a tendency among unemployed young men to desert their families for women who have professional jobs and "posh" houses. Three out of four women who were deserted by their husbands reported that the latter lived with "wealthy" lovers in another part of Soweto (see also Chant, 1985, p.637).

This factor - the inability of men to provide for household survival - points to the long-term and devastating impact which the unequal distribution of opportunities is having on family life in the South African townships. Other studies on township families have also emphasised the negative impact of chronic unemployment and

poverty on family life (e.g. Ramphele, 1993; Campbell, 1990). In cities where families have to depend almost entirely on cash transactions, intra-household relations are likely to disintegrate if both partners have no regular earnings.

This study did not directly attempt to verify the negative impact of economic and political pressures on single-parent family life in Orlando East. But a recent study (Burman, 1990) estimated that among low-income township families in the Western Cape, fifty percent of marriages ended in divorce in the first ten years because of excessive financial strains on partners. This observation undoubtedly links family breakdown to poverty. This is not an unusual finding as parallels have been noted by other similar studies (e.g. Buvinic *et al* (1978), in the Caribbean; Chant, 1984; 1985, in Mexico).

According to 50 percent of the respondents three factors, namely, violence, infidelity and alcoholism usually went hand-in-hand in households where there were financial strains. The general view among respondents was that while it was accepted that male infidelity was usually an inevitability in many marriages, excessive drinking coupled with violence was regarded as unacceptable. Yet, many women had experienced violence which they attributed to the fact that their partners had extra-marital relationships.

Because township alcohol outlets, such as *shebeens* and taverns, provide convenient venues where married men meet and entertain girlfriends and friends, there was a tendency among respondents to associate these outlets with male infidelity. This

behavioral pattern, as seen by respondents, has a negative impact on family resources because the money which would otherwise be allocated to the family budget is spent on alcohol and on entertaining lovers and friends.

The other side of the coin however, and some women confirmed this, is that women who are abused or deserted by their husbands would often take in a lover either subtly or openly. This, the women reported, was usually done to ensure financial security, but also for companionship. Yet all women who lived with lovers conceded that they still carried heavier burdens of household finances than their live-in partners. This means that even though a boyfriend or partner contributes to the household budget, the contribution is likely to be unpredictable and unreliable. Women find that they cannot compel boyfriends to contribute regularly, especially if they have dependent children from another man. Besides, in many cases such men have already evaded the responsibility for providing for their own (original) households.

4.2 Scale and Prevalence of Female-Headed Households in Orlando East

Table 4.2, based on data from a SALDRU/World Bank (1994) study, shows the percentage of households headed by women in South Africa. The table shows that female-headed households are most prevalent among Africans. While they are more prevalent in the rural areas, due to male job-related migration, they are also relatively common in towns and cities.

Table 4.2: Scale and Prevalence of Female-Headed Households in South Africa

AREA	AFRICAN	COLOURED	INDIAN	WHITE	TOTAL
RURAL	44	8	0	9	42
URBAN	35	38	17	10	29
METROP-OLITAN	36	23	11	15	30
ALL	41	28	14	15	35

Source: *SALDRU/WB, 1994; Government of South Africa, 1994(b)*

There are reasons however, to assume that the above figures somewhat underestimate the incidence of African female-headed households. This is primarily due to their definition of female household headship which is derived from that used in the national census. This is based on the legal definition of single status in South Africa, which includes only women who are either widowed, legally separated, divorced or were never married (SALDRU/World Bank, 1994).

The Orlando East Township Office on the other hand estimated that 40 percent of all households were headed by women[4], while community workers attached to the Municipal Office put the figure at 50 percent claiming that the Soweto Council figures were outdated. The community workers maintain that the Orlando Office statistics, like those of other Soweto townships, are based on official records which determined headship by gender of the chief tenant. According to these old records the chief tenant was likely to be male unless the woman is widowed.

[4] This figure was an estimate by the Township Manager. The official documentation showing the names of the chief tenants in Orlando East was given to me, but even by his own standards it was outdated by several years. In that list the majority of heads (registered "chief" tenants) were males.

Having determined household headship by function, this study estimated that as many as 65 percent of the households had women as chief or sole contributors to household budgets, that is, they were heads of households in economic terms (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3: Different Estimates of the Prevalence of Female-Headed Households in Orlando East/South Africa by source

SOURCE	ESTIMATE (%)
SALDRU/World Bank	35 (Urban Africans) 36 (Metropolitan Africans)
Orlando East Municipal Office	40
Soweto Council Workers	50
Orlando East Survey Estimate (1992)	**65**

In a number of households it was found that many registered tenants were not among the occupants of the home or were living away from home on a permanent basis. In some cases the registered chief tenant, the acknowledged head, was the eldest, or otherwise, *male* sibling of the people who occupied the house. The "official" estimates therefore understate the phenomenon of female household headship notwithstanding the present study's own definition of household headship, which would naturally increase the number of women-headed households since it emphasises the economic function of household headship. In particular, these surveys do not systematically account for *de facto* female heads.

On discussing the above mentioned discrepancies with the ex- Soweto mayor, Mr Nelson Botile, he revealed that it was generally common in Soweto to give the name of the male person to authorities as the chief tenant irrespective of his whereabouts or his responsibilities within the home. The fear of the possibility of losing the house

has in the past deterred many households from transferring the tenancy to a woman despite changes in family circumstances which would justify such a move. This situation has since improved as more women are being allowed to take over the ownership of houses in their own right, but many would rather not attempt to contest the right of chief tenancy to the rented family house for fear of the system which many still believe is generally biased against women. In my observation the only women who would dare to seek ownership of the "family home" were those in a position to buy it from the Council. The exception are those women who are heads of households by virtue of having kept the home after divorcing their partners.

Another cause of the underestimation of female heads in Orlando East and in other townships could be that official statistics on backyard shack-dwellers are often inaccurate because of the unfixed nature of their sub-tenancy, coupled with the shack-dwellers' own desire to lie low and avoid any form of official counting and possible reprisals.

The conceptual frameworks used to come up with the above estimates are too varied to make any accurate generalisation about the incidence of female-headed households in South Africa. This dilemma reinforces the view expressed earlier in this chapter that the definition of household headship should reflect that aspect of headship being examined (Rosenhouse, 1989).

More fundamentally however, these figures point to the need for more comprehensive *independent* surveys to determine the incidence of women-headed households in South

Africa, their economic activities, as well as the institutional and ideological framework which defines their status and positions as a special category. In other words, there is a need for a conceptual and methodological framework which can be applied to capture the incidence of both *de jure* and *de facto* female household headship.

4.3 Economic Well-being of Female-Headed Households: Sources of Income

This section considers the sources of incomes of female heads who were interviewed for this study. As explained in Chapter 1, these women were all informally employed, i.e. they were engaged in a variety of usually small-scale income-generation activities. In most cases household heads had to have more than one source of income at any given time because of the unreliability of their informal earnings. Apart from earnings through trade and informal enterprises, and whatever means are available, many women also received money through intra- and inter-household transfers (see Chapter 5 and 6). These were either from members of extended kin in residence, and/or from acquired informal networks. The difficulties of accurately measuring incomes and transfers of women who are not formally employed, as well as tracing their sources are emphasised, and efforts have been made to address these problems through the application of multiple research techniques (see Chapter 1).

In this study I have decided not to analyze the absolute incomes of household members as they were largely not made available to the household head for joint household expenditure on a regular basis. I have sought to specifically analyze those incomes which are *pooled together* (in cases where this happens) for the purpose of household survival (see also Guyer, 1980, p.6), and which will be referred to

henceforth as pooled household income.

This is not to assert that household members always operate as strictly independent and separate entities. Yet, one should not overemphasise their inter-dependence either. While a few adult household members contributed to joint household budgets, in almost all cases a woman head found that she had to subordinate her own needs to respond to scarcity from time to time. Guyer (ibid, p.4) rightly points out that "individual men and women [not necessarily husband and wife] maintain rights [within households] from which they gain resources and to which they devote income." Yet, she also highlights that (p.6) "because food production decisions fall on women ..... the daily levels of nutrition and standard of living may depend more heavily on the women's rather than on men's incomes". In other words, in whatever way they garner their income, most of *women's* rather than men's income go into household reproduction. It is usually possible and acceptable for men to have extra-household personal expenditure, a privilege largely not enjoyed by women. Therefore, the inter-dependence, if it exists, cannot be said to be based on genuine equality.

Table 4.4 shows that 60 percent of respondents received part of their cash from relatives and other people within or outside the household, thus augmenting their income earned from other sources. The high incidence of transfers received, however, should not be taken to imply that female household heads depend mainly on transfers for their survival. Quite often these transfers are either irregular and/or small or both and cannot be the main means of survival on their own. For many women these transfers were so unpredictable, both in frequency and amount, that many found it

difficult to keep track of exact amounts contributed. It was particularly difficult for heads to attach monetary values to contributions made in kind, such as the provision of food items by an extended household member.

Table 4.4: Sources of Income of Orlando East Respondents (n=50)*

Source	No. of Respondents	% of Respondents
transfers	30	60
shebeener	13	26
state pension	10	20
shack subletting	8	16
odd jobs	8	16
illicit dealing	6	12
food production	5	10
dressmaking	4	8
street vending	4	8
soft goods trade	3	6
child minding	2	4
spaza shop	1	2

*the total number of respondents involved will be higher than the sample size because all women, except for two, had more than one source of income

Source: *Orlando East Survey Data, 1992-3*

Another prominent source of income, mentioned by 26 percent of respondents, was the operation of *shebeens. Shebeens* varied greatly in terms of their size and the income they bring in. The success of a *shebeen* depended on a number of factors such as the number of other *shebeens* on the same street or in the neighbourhood, the cleanliness and comfort of the house, the willingness of the owner to operate for long hours, the perceived safety of patrons from criminal elements, and the network of customer support enjoyed by the operator.

The least successful *shebeen* operator had a monthly income of R180.00 and the most

successful made about R2000.00. The average monthly income of a *shebeen* operator was R730.00. Therefore, as a group, *shebeeners* were the best off (surpassed only by a few drug-dealers-cum-*shebeeners*), not only because they enjoyed the highest single incomes, but also because their incomes were more stable compared to, say, odd job holders and street vendors.

Another important source of income was the subletting of back-yard shacks. In all, 16 percent of respondents reported to be earning some income in this way. The figure looks quite small when one considers the fact that more than 80 percent of Orlando East households have either back rooms or back-yard shacks on their property. However some of these back-yard dwellings are often occupied by members of the extended family, who are either part of the main household, or are a separate unit. In addition, many back-yard sub-tenants do not make their payments to the head of the household (as defined in this study), but to that household member who erected the shack on the property. In such cases the sub-letting income has not been recorded under the category of shack sub-letting because it often did not accrue directly to the head of the household, and in most cases was not used towards the sustenance of the household. In Orlando East the right of household members to erect shacks on the property derives from the fact that a family house is often regarded as joint property having been inherited by siblings from their parents. In such cases it is found that male siblings tend to claim more right to the home than female siblings, and they are the ones who usually build shacks for their own personal income or for occupation. Many of the disputes handled by the Orlando Civic Association revolved around the right to the family home.

The 16 percent of the sample who were doing odd jobs are another significant category, but their activities are very difficult to break down because, as one woman put it, they "did merely anything available on a given day" to earn a living. It was observed that the odd job holders were the poorest group in the sample, and they were all, except for one, either renting or back-yard shack-dwellers with no property of their own. My observation was that there was a relationship between the respondents' security of tenure and the nature of their income- generating activities. For example, shack dwellers only engaged in small ventures which are conducted off the property where they are renting a shack, whereas those who own property tended to own *shebeens*, were child-minders and could own a *spaza* shop. The only three shack dwellers in the sample were at the lowest end of the income scale, with less than R400.00 per month. The study of the informal sector undertaken by Liedholm and McPherson (1991), mentioned in Chapter 2, supports this observation as it found that work-space was one of the most frequently cited problems the operators face.

All respondents (10 percent) who were involved in home food production were also operating *shebeens*. As already mentioned, these women were the best off in terms of both security of tenure and size and security of income (with the exception of illicit dealers).

The "dealers", as they are simply called in townships, are involved in a range of activities such as cannabis pushing, "car-shifting" (i.e. car thieving and re-selling in neighbouring states)[5], etc. However, they all had other means of income- generation

[5] In almost all cases of car-shifting I was told that men are involved, but only in the background. This is because if a car is in a woman's name, police are not likely to suspect that it is stolen.

to "front" (i.e. to conceal) their activities. It took long months and persistent informal visits to obtain information about the income-generation activities of "dealers". I am still certain that I did not get the full picture of their activities because, for obvious security reasons, they were very cautious when discussing their business. My efforts were also frustrated by the fact that a person who accompanied me on rounds was a local Orlando East man, and this made some respondents reluctant to discuss the full scale of their income-earning activities.[6]

It is important to point out that when respondents were initially asked about their occupations or their means of earning a living, 34 percent were recorded as having no visible occupation. This underlines the hazards of studies which look at respondents' occupations to determine whether or not they are economically active. Without efforts to further break down incomes and expenditure of some of the respondents on a daily and weekly basis by sources and destinations (see Appendix 3), I would not have been able to work out how the seemingly "occupationless" respondents earned their income.

4.3.1. The Link between Formal Education and Informal Incomes

It was found that a relationship between the respondents' level of formal education and their income was weak (Pearson's r=0.2345, at 90% confidence level). It could be that the strong link suggested in the literature between levels of education and income-earning opportunities among women within an African context (e.g. Mazrui, 1992) applies only to those who are formally employed, and not to those who generate

[6] Also, the only two dealers who were in the oral history panel declined to participate when I outlined the purpose and intensity of the discussion.

their means of livelihood through informal means (Table 4.5). My sample, of course, deliberately excluded formally employed women (Chapter 1).

Some informal sector studies have suggested that rather more, than less, formal education is likely to have a positive effect on the development of informal sector activities (Swainson, 1992). Yet, more research still needs to be done to determine the exact articulation between years of schooling, as well as the quality of the educational experience, and informal sector output (King, 1989). This will help to determine the appropriate training needs of informal sector operators.

Income-generating opportunities among the surveyed women in Orlando East seemed to depend either on security of tenure (implying work-space), the nature of informal networks an operator enjoys[7], or the non-formal or on-the-job skills they possessed.

4.4 Economic Wellbeing of Female-Headed Households: Income Levels

The difficulties in accurately determining the income levels of informally- and seasonally-employed people have been repeatedly cited in this study, and they are well documented in the literature (Guyer, 1980; Mueller, 1983). In this study efforts were made, through a combination of methodological approaches, to document all income accruing to the head which is used for the survival of the household. In comparing this pooled income with national income proportions, it is demonstrated that the incomes of households such as those in Orlando East, are not systematically included in

[7] That is probably why, amongst the 50 respondents, original Orlando East inhabitants were, on the whole, materially better off than the newly-urbanised sub-tenants.

national statistics. The next section will examine the expenditure patterns of the respondent households by breaking down the key items on which the household heads spend these jointly pooled earnings.

The data shown in Table 4.5 below suggest that while Orlando East respondents are concentrated in the low income brackets, they are no different from the rest of other Africans.

Table 4.5: Comparison of Monthly Household Incomes of Orlando East Respondents and National Household Income Distribution by Race (%)

Income Group (SA Rand)	*Orlando Sample*	African Hhds	Coloured Hhds	Indian Hhds	White Hhds
1-399	***28***	30	12	3	1
400-699	***26***	24	13	5	2
700-1199	***32***	26	22	14	5
1200-1999	***12***	11	21	23	9
2000-2499	***0***	4	8	12	7
2500+	***2***	5	24	43	76
TOTAL	***100***	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**

Source: *Orlando East Survey Data; SAIRR, 1994, p.484 p.10*

Yet a brief examination of incomes depicted in the Survey and the nature of Orlando East respondents' income is instructive as it indicates that Orlando East respondents and their households are, in practice, materially worse off. The Race Relations Survey

figures depict the national picture which includes all the South African provinces which happen to be disparate in virtually all indicators including incomes and household subsistence levels (Government of South Africa, 1994(b). Second, the Surveys's figures are calculated from those formal and informal incomes that are accounted for in national accounts. It is now known that the only informal incomes which are systematically accounted for are small enterprises (SMEs), and not micro-enterprises of the kind that were identified in Orlando East (Swainson, 1992). Swainson (1992) cites several recent studies of the informal sector in South Africa which agree that more than a quarter of all township households are engaged in some form of small-scale activity. She further notes that the smallest activities, including illegal activities, represent the "hidden income" (estimated at 22% of the total income of Africans in 1986) which is unrecorded in official statistics (p.4). It is argued therefore that incomes of households like those surveyed in Orlando East, whose income-earning activities are very small in scale, are not really depicted in the Race Relations Survey's figures. The unpredictable nature of these incomes renders the surveyed households, and all those in similar position more materially *insecure* and therefore, it is argued, "poorer" than the raw data initially suggest. The uncertainty with which women struggled to piece together all bits of income they earned in a given day or week represented the insecurity characteristic of their households' existence.

A further significant factor indicating that Orlando East respondents are worst off is the fact that the Race Relations Survey data include rural households, which are even poorer on average than urban households. The rural incomes have therefore pulled

down national income levels. The close similarity between pooled incomes of surveyed Orlando East households and national income levels of (rural and urban) Africans suggest therefore that by urban standards Orlando East respondents are poorer.

The first report to seriously consider the position of women in South Africa (Government of South Africa, 1994(b)) confirms that households headed by women have the lowest incomes among all population groups (Table 4.6). The cited report has been prepared for the ten yearly women's world conference which is due to be held in Beijing in September 1995.

Table 4.6: Comparison between Average Monthly Income of Women-headed and other Households in South Africa, and of Orlando East Sample (SA Rand)

HOUSEHOLD	African	Coloured	Indian	White	All	*O/E Sample*
All (Total)	1005	2055	4009	6394	2089	
Woman-headed (Total)	833	1571	2199	3269	1141	***722***
All (per/cpt)	210	443	926	2112	468	
Woman-headed (per/cpt)	165	342	695	1685	243	***159***

Source: *Government of South Africa, 1994(b), p.19*
Orlando East Survey Data, 1992/3

The report, compiled in a period following the April 1994 democratic elections, looks into development indicators along gender and class lines, and it serves as a starting point in the process of monitoring women's status in South Africa. Though the

indicators discussed include the previously independent homelands as well as the rural and urban areas, problems with South African data sources, on which the report is based, have been stressed in its methodology. Because in South Africa class often coincides with race, the race breakdowns of data have been used as a proxy for class distinctions.

With regard to the Orlando East sample, figures in Table 4.6 show that they are even poorer than the average African female-headed household. This situation is made worse by the fact that their households are larger, with higher than average dependency ratios[8] of 4.54:1, compared to 3.1:1 for the PWV region of which Soweto is part (SAIRR, 1994). This has resulted in the smallest per capita shares per household member in Orlando East. Again the fact that the figures in Table 4.6 include rural incomes indicate that by urban standards Orlando East households are very poor.

It could be argued that the Orlando East sample shows lower dependency ratios than an average African female-headed household as depicted by national figures. But then the dependency ratios in the national surveys are raised by the rural households' dependency ratios which are usually higher than those of urban households. Yet, because Orlando East households, like the rest of urban households, and unlike the

[8] In this study the average dependency ratio (DR) has been calculated by dividing the total number of children and the unemployed, pensioners and non-contributing members by the total number of female-headed households.

$$\mathbf{DR} = \frac{\text{no of children + unemployed/pensioners/non-contributors}}{\text{female household head}}$$

rural ones, are almost wholly dependent on cash incomes for their survival, very low incomes may mean real poverty for urban households.

The difficulties of accurate comparability between national indicators and those discussed with regard to the Orlando East sample are recognised. As mentioned previously, these mainly relate to the fact that the national surveys include rural households and ex-homelands which on average are poorer than urban households. The inclusion of rural incomes in the national data which are significantly lower than urban incomes, inevitably pulls down the national income levels. Second, it is difficult to deduce from the national data base if it calculated pooled incomes or all incomes of those who earn, and in the process assumed the pooling. The SALDRU/World Bank baseline household statistical report, from which the above cited government report draws much of its data argues that they assumed the household to comprise of members who "contribute to the household through wages and salaries or other cash and in-kind income or (those who may have been) benefitting from this income *but not contributing to it*, e.g. children *and other non-economically active people* in the household." (my emphasis). While this is an effective denotation as it refers to the possible pooling (and lack of) of resources within the household, it has two specific problems. First, it assumes that only those with no earnings fail to contribute, and implicitly assumes that those with some income do contribute. As the present study and many others have shown, the actual dynamics of household budgeting are more complex than that. Secondly, it is not clear what was the incidence of actual income pooling among the 9000 households surveyed nationally (by SALDRU), and it is therefore not readily clear whose incomes the SALDRU/World Bank survey depicts.

The present study did not depict incomes which are not part of common household consumption, concentrating instead on pooled incomes accruing to the head, and which are used for the sustenance of the household.

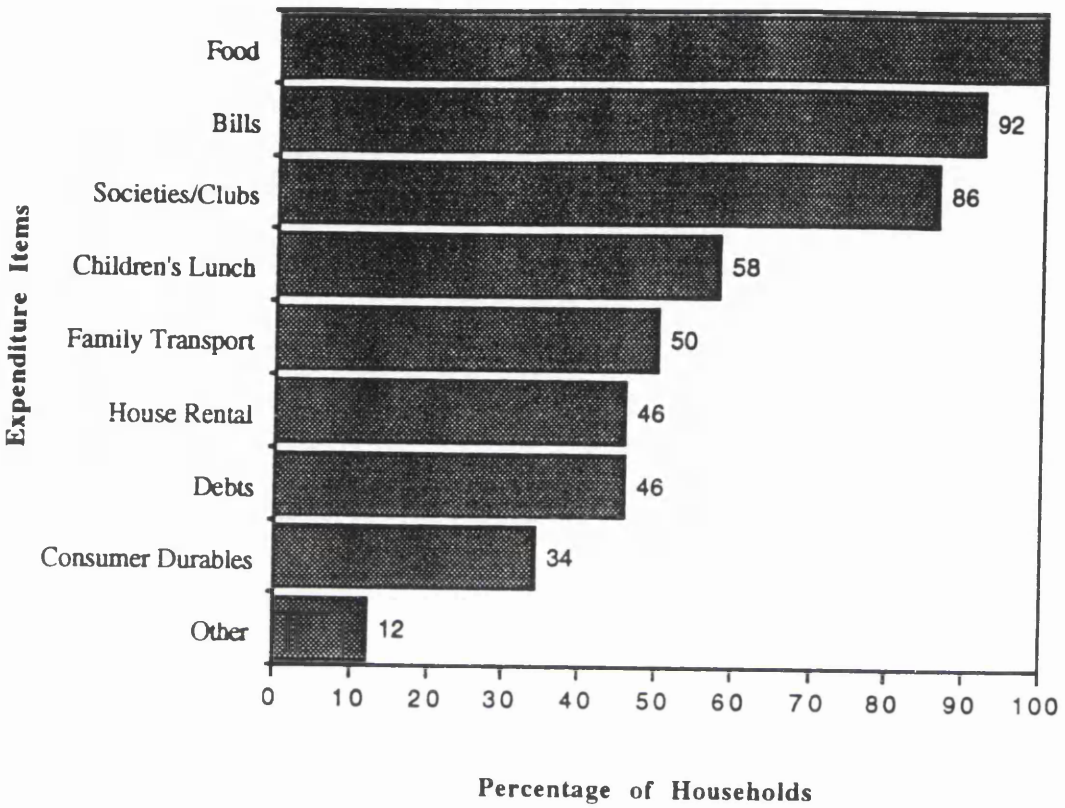
Despite these difficulties, it is argued that a comparison of surveyed household incomes with national ones is useful, especially from a gender and policy point of view, because it points to the discrepancies arising from a failure to capture adequately the intra-household differences in welfare levels. The next section examines expenditure patterns of surveyed households.

4.5 Economic Wellbeing of Female-headed Households: Expenditure Patterns

The average monthly household expenditure of surveyed households was R722.10. This expenditure (of pooled income) is much lower than the household subsistence level of low income households in Johannesburg which was R922.30 in 1992 (SAIRR, 1994), the period in which this study was undertaken.

Figure 4.1 below shows the percentage of households incurring expenditure on various commodities on a regular basis as a percentage of all surveyed households.

Fig 4.1: Percentage of Households Incurring Expenditure on Various Commodities



Source: *Orlando East Survey Data, 1992-93*

All respondent households reported having at least one meal, usually an evening meal, per day. Those who remained at home, and school-going children usually consumed bread and tea during the course of the day. Maize-meal is the staple diet for all households interviewed. This is usually purchased in bulk, and eaten with a meat or vegetable relish, *isishebo*, which has to be procured on a daily basis. The households spent an average of R222.50 (SD=R125.00) on food per month (Table 4.7).

Table 4.7: Commodity Shares of Average Monthly Household Expenditure (SA Rands)

Commodity	Households Incurring (%)	Mean Expenditure.*	Standard Deviation*
A. Food	100	227.30	125.00
B. Bills	92	127.13	134.00
C. Societies and Clubs	86	119.00	133.00
D. Children's lunch	58	81.00	83.00
E. Public Transport	50	77.60	76.00
F. House Rentals	46	52.00	20.00
G. Debt Repayment	46	194.00	150.00
H. Durables	34	160.00	126.00
I. Other	12	235.00	165.00

* the means and standard deviations do not include 0 values for households not spending on an item
Source: *Orlando East Survey Data, 1992-93*

The second most regular area of expenditure was on bills. These include monthly

payment of clothing accounts, telephone and electricity bills, but exclude durables, house rentals, transport expenses and other debts. All the households had electricity bills which most (92 percent) paid regularly. Just over half (58 percent) had telephones, and less than 40 percent had active clothing accounts, mainly for the children. Bills accounted for 18 percent of total monthly household expenditure. The mean expenditure on bills per month was R127.13 (SD=R134.00). As can be seen from the high standard deviation, expenditure on bills per month was extremely variable between households. A consideration of some factors affecting budget decisions within the household helps to explain varying shares allocated to different commodities. These are discussed in some detail in the last section of Chapter Four.

Clubs and societies, particularly burial societies, are another major area of regular monthly expenditure for 86 percent of the households. The mean expenditure on clubs and societies was R119 (SD=R133.00). While all household heads involved in clubs and societies contribute regularly, the figures shown in Table 4.7 indicate that the size of their contributions vary widely. In Chapter 5 I discuss in detail the importance the women, and Sowetans in general, place on clubs and societies, as well as the way societies function.

Apart from the regular financial commitments mentioned above, it was found that some households (46 percent) had current debts which they paid every month. These were usually owed either to friends, family and/or one of the neighbourhood

organisations mentioned above[9]. Loans are usually sought if there is a crisis in the family such as illness, sudden death not covered by burial societies, legal problems, or if a family needs a large sum of money at the beginning of the school term, and for many similar reasons. In other words, loans are often made if there is a need for extra expenditure over and above that covered by the regular monthly budget from which there is usually nothing left over once the basic necessary expenditure has been made. As Table 4.7 shows, only 12 percent of the households had some money left over for discretionary expenditure (Category I) after all the basic necessary expenditure had been incurred.

The disadvantage of putting money aside through savings clubs is that it cannot be accessed before the agreed upon period, usually one year, when savings are divided among all members. The members of the savings clubs are nonetheless allowed to borrow against the club's savings.

Only 34 percent of households had current expenditure towards consumer durables. This could partially be due to the fact that Orlando East is an old settlement and not many families were still furnishing their homes on a large scale. The mean expenditure on durables was R160.00 (SD=126.00) per month. Items such as a radio, a television set and a fridge were common durables towards which families had active monthly accounts. There were a number of households in which there were cars, but these almost always belonged to another household member, the bulk of whose

[9]Monetary debts do not come under what has been categorised as non-market transfers in the thesis.

income did not go towards household expenditure. Only 2 of the 50 women interviewed owned cars themselves and, according to the owners, these had already been paid up.

Half of the surveyed households incurred regular expenses on public transport. Many respondents and their families did not use public transport on a regular basis because their economic activities were largely based in the township. A few traders used transport only on those days when they had to go to town or to wholesalers to buy stock. Children of primary school age did not use transport either, because they attended local schools. Only high school children attending school far from home used public transport on a daily basis. Even then, a lot of Orlando East high school children go to the local Orlando East High School. As a result the household heads and their dependants spent relatively less on transport.

Over half (58 percent) of surveyed households incurred regular expenditure on lunch for the school-going children. This does not mean that this is the proportion of households with school-going children. Some of the children carried packed lunches, usually bread, to school. Some heads reported that they could not afford to give their children lunch money and the latter had to eat whatever food is available in the house when they returned from school. In my observation however, older high school children almost always preferred money to carrying packed lunches.

Only 12 percent of the households had some money left after incurring basic household expenditure. This small number of households can be said to be

comparatively better off than the rest. The households concerned spent on average R235.00 on such things as entertainment, impulsive buying of clothing, cigarettes, alcohol, and occasional home-help.

Less than half (46 percent) of the surveyed households paid some rent. Even some of these admitted that they were not paying the rentals on a regular basis. Women gave conflicting figures on the amount of rent they were required to pay. On average R52.00 went towards the payment of rent and amenities.

Since the late 1980's many townships around the Reef region, of which Soweto is one, embarked on a rent boycott partially as a protest against the failure of Local Authorities to provide basic services. At a political level, these boycotts were another form of rejecting the Community Councils which many township residents regarded as an extension of the apartheid regime. This explains the non-payment of house and service rentals by many Orlando East households.

Rent remains a sensitive issue in Soweto, and paying households were not candid in discussing it for fear of reprisals by neighbours since many did not pay.

It should be reiterated that the budget shares discussed above are those controlled by the head of the household. In other words, the money spent is the jointly pooled income which is intended for household consumption. The research revealed that only very few extended household members contributed on a regular basis, thus leaving the head as the key person responsible for household provisioning. I elaborate on this

point in Chapter 6 in which the role of extended household members in augmenting the household budget is discussed.

The next and final section considers factors affecting expenditure decisions within the household, as well as the relationship between total expenditure and dependency ratios.

4.6 Factors Affecting Household Expenditure: Dependency Ratios

As already mentioned, the present study defines household expenditure as that which is determined by the availability of pooled resources (i.e. pooled cash income). This definition of household income and expenditure therefore takes into account only those incomes which are available for joint household expenditure, and private income of adult household members which is not used for household sustenance is not accounted for. It is not surprising therefore that there was no significant correlation (even at the 90% confidence level) between total expenditure and dependency ratio (Pearson's r=0.196). Data are insufficient to meaningfully work out a relationship between different expenditure brackets and dependency ratios on the one hand, and between dependency ratios and expenditure on specific items on the other.

Yet, an analysis of some of the factors affecting expenditure decisions within the household reveals how different households make out, thereby keeping down expenditure on some of the items (e.g. food, transport, clothing, societies, etc) which would otherwise be expected to rise with an increase in dependency ratio.

Some recent studies have generated findings which suggest that households often cut

down their food expenditure as part of household budget adjustment in times of extreme austerity (Beneria, 1992). This can be achieved in a number of ways such as buying lower quality food from street vendors instead of buying from regular grocery outlets, cutting out such expensive food items as meat, reducing the number of meals per day, etc. In Orlando East, it was found that for many of the poorest households meat was either consumed only on Sundays, or had been eliminated altogether from the diet, and the majority had only one meal per day thus keeping down expenditure on food. The same was true with clothing bills as it was found that heads of the poorest households were not buying clothes for themselves, but usually kept accounts only for the uniforms of their school-going children.

In those households where dependants are not necessarily of school-going age, but are non-contributing adults, expenditure on clothing bills, transport to school, and lunch money for scholars does not have to go up with the increase in dependency ratio. This study found that of the 112 extended household members, 100 were adults of whom 78 were dependants. The daily expenditure usually associated with school-going children did not apply to adult dependants who happened to be a sizeable number. In such cases therefore expenditure patterns are not necessarily dependent on the dependency ratio.

A further examination of factors affecting expenditure decisions on other key non-food items such as societies and clubs, consumer durables, debt repayments, etc., further illustrates how budget decisions may influence expenditure independent of dependency ratios. Societies and clubs for example, are a major area of regular expenditure for a

large majority (86 percent) of the households. The amount which household heads invest in burial societies for example is less determined by the number of their dependants, and more by the resources they have to join as many societies as they can[10]. In other words, the amount of monthly contributions made to the burial society does not depend on the number of dependants registered with a burial society. Furthermore, a low dependency ratio for some households may release more money for expenditure on social and savings clubs, thus raising their total expenditure, while those households whose dependency ratios are high limit their expenditure to day-to-day necessities, thereby keeping it low.

4.7 Summary of Chapter 4

Chapter 4, the first of the five chapters discussing the study findings, considers material well-being and the socio-economic profiles of female-headed households in Orlando East.

The first part of this chapter analyzed the causes of female household headship in Orlando East. It was argued that the main underlying causes were on the one hand, disparate spending priorities between women and men, and on the other, the inability of men to provide materially for household survival. It was argued that the latter factor is strongly linked to declining economic conditions in South Africa, coupled with a socio-economic system which has ensured an unequal distribution of resources among

[10] In some burial societies if a member has dependants who live in rural areas, or who are not closely related to a contributing member, they are required to pay an extra contribution. This is however rare as societies are generally wary of including non-relatives and rural relatives in burial schemes because of internal clashes this causes among club members.

races, with Africans getting the worst deal.

The second section examined the data on the prevalence of female-headed households in South Africa and Orlando East. It was suggested that the frameworks used in many official surveys and estimates were inadequate to capture the full scale and incidence of female-headed households. The present study did not systematically seek to determine the prevalence of female-headed households, but observation of the surveyed households as well as secondary sources suggest that official counting underestimates the scale of the situation. It was suggested that a comprehensive methodological framework was necessary to capture the scale of both *de jure* and *de facto* female heads of households. Such a framework will have to take into consideration the economic functions of household headship.

The third section of Chapter 4 examined the sources of incomes of female household heads. It was shown that almost all women earned their income from more than one source. All sources of income, including non-market transfers, accruing to the head were examined. The difficulties of keeping track of all income and of attaching values on transfers were emphasised. The important finding discussed in this section, which has significant policy implications, was that no significant relationship was found between the level of formal education and informal sector incomes.

The fourth section examined the levels of income of respondent households. The findings suggest that while the pooled incomes of surveyed Orlando households looked quite similar to incomes of other African households on the surface, the Orlando

households were actually materially worse off by urban standards, their incomes looking similar to national ones, which have been pulled down by rural incomes which are significantly lower than urban incomes. Further, the unpredictable nature and the *insecurity* of incomes of Orlando East household heads was emphasised as a critical factor contributing to their poverty.

The fifth section looked into the patterns of expenditure of respondent households, while the sixth and final section of Chapter 4 considered the factors affecting expenditure decisions at a household level taking into account the dependency ratios. It was shown how resource distribution decisions within the household may keep down expenditure on those items which would otherwise be expected to rise with an increase in dependency ratios.

The following chapters which discuss the different themes pertaining to household survival strategies of female heads, will draw from the findings discussed in this chapter, and will further elaborate on them. A number of policy and research implications arise from the findings discussed in this chapter. These will be taken up in Chapter 9 where the policy and research implications of the study will be spelled out.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTER-HOUSEHOLD TRANSFERS[1] AND GRASSROOTS[2] ORGANISATIONS

5.0. Introduction

In South Africa where there is a general lack of social welfare and institutionalised public support services for the poor and the unemployed, the most marginalised groups have to devise means of mutual support in periods of economic and material austerity. These often include the restructuring of household relations, the deployment of household members into wage work, changes and adjustments in household form and composition, etc. But also, poor urban households, as this study established, tend to depend more and more on one another for support as economic stresses become too heavy for the household as an entity to bear.

In other words, in times of economic austerity households are often compelled to command support from sources beyond the household itself. The role played by structures of mutual support among households has not been adequately analyzed in an expanding mosaic of literature concerned with the daily survival strategies of poor households in Third World cities. The aim of Chapter 5 therefore, is to assess the

[1]These are variously referred to as inter-household networks of reciprocity, non-market exchanges and non-market transfers.

[2]In this context "grassroots" denotes those organisations which are formed and run by local people themselves to address their local felt needs without the involvement of either professional development workers or outsiders. A principle of these organisations is often equal say, with all members taking turns in carrying out duties of the club.

significance of both inter-household networks of reciprocity and urban grassroots movements for the survival of urban poor households, with a specific focus on Orlando East.

In Chapter 6 of this thesis it is demonstrated that the presence of extended family household forms *per se* is not always useful for the woman in charge of the poor household. This research generated findings which point to the fact that in the context of urban poverty and unemployment where survival and well-being are largely met through the cash economy, extended family forms are often not of much **material** benefit to the head. Many studies agree that urbanisation often erodes traditional family support systems, therefore forcing women to use a variety of non-kinship networks for the survival of their households (Mueller, 1983; Cain, Khanan and Nahar, 1979).

Using data gathered in Orlando East, in this chapter it will be argued that inter-household networks of reciprocity and urban grassroots movements are more useful for the survival of African township households than many studies on household economies portray. Many studies have instead concentrated on various forms of intra-household or kin-based mutual assistance for the survival of poor households. Extra-familial networks are particularly critical in the case of divorced, separated or abandoned female heads of households where various pressures have already undermined the ability of the co-resident partners to ensure survival.

A very significant proportion (44%) of household heads who were interviewed for the present study fell within one of these categories, i.e. either divorced or separated

(Chapter 4). If in cities, it is largely economic factors which have led to the disintegration of familial relationships, it is unlikely that the household's standard of living can improve by merely incorporating extra kin. Whether the economic position of the household improves through residence of extra kin depends on additional factors such as whether the latter is/are able or willing to make a contribution towards household income or resources. The reality is that in periods of austerity when many people are unemployed, extended family members will often not be able to make meaningful economic contributions[3]. The tendency is for them to look to the head of the household to provide materially for the rest of the members.

In this chapter it is demonstrated how in Orlando East female heads of households employ different creative mechanisms to generate consumption and production which ensure survival. It should be pointed out however that inter-household networks of reciprocity and mutual aid assistance through involvement in grassroots movements are not exclusive to poor communities, and the research reported here noted that inter-household transfers also operated for middle-class households. However, it is only amongst the poor that these are almost indispensable.[4] For middle-class households inter-household transfers appeared to be few (15%) and infrequent. Table 5.1 shows the contrast in the incidence of inter-household networks for the two townships

[3]This is not to say that extended family members are not at all functional. They are invaluable in so far as they provide emotional support, or even helping with household chores. The extent to which researchers and policy makers have been successful in attaching economic value to household chores is not clear. This aspect is taken up elsewhere in this thesis.

[4] The intensity however, varies between communities, see for example, Beneria (1992)

sampled (i.e. Orlando East and Protea). This chapter is divided into two major parts. The first part considers non-market transfers as observed in Orlando East. The second part looks into the nature, importance and functions of Orlando East women's grassroots organisations. In the process of discussion relevant material will be cited to further elucidate the importance of non-market transfers for the urban poor women.

Table 5.1: Incidence of Non-Market Transfers in Orlando East and Protea

	ORLANDO EAST=50	PROTEA NORTH=20
YES	30 (60%)	3 (15%)
NO	20 (40%)	17 (85%)

Source: *Orlando East and Protea Survey Data, 1992-93*

5.1. Non-Market Transfers

Highlighting the use and impact of inter-household networks of reciprocity when analysing all aspects of household economies is important for two main reasons related to the development of policy and programmes directed towards poor households. First, such an analysis illuminates the need for re-conceptualising the household in development policy and planning because, as we know, public policy tends to make erroneous assumptions about the household. It takes for granted the responsibility of household members towards one another's wellbeing, as well as their willingness and capability to fulfil that responsibility. As many studies, including this one, show, this is not always the case especially in times of economic austerity (Agarwal, 1992).

Second, such an analysis points to the need for policy to complement rather than to undermine people's own efforts at dealing with contingencies, "with people being seen as actors in the process of change rather than as passive recipients of aid or relief" (Agarwal, 1992, pp.181-2).

5.1.1. Non-Market Transfers and the Urban Poor

Current data on socio-economic conditions and economic survival strategies of either rural or urban female heads of households are inadequate. Despite being unsystematic and scattered, most study findings suggest that not only are female-headed households particularly disadvantaged in their income earning opportunities, but they also experience limited access to basic services when compared with male-headed households in the same socio-economic category (Buvinic and Youssef, 1978; Buvinic *et al*, 1983; Townsend and Momsen, 1987; Brydon and Chant, 1989). This situation, when it takes place in cities, leaves women with limited choices but to work together in either a haphazard manner or through well-worked out strategies to ensure survival.

Considering the fact that female household headship resulting from the breakdown of families is a norm in South African townships, and the fact that rural poverty has resulted in the uprooting of many rural households, it is surprising that no coherent material exists to explain their strategies of survival through informal means beyond the level of their own households (i.e. through non-market transfers). This chapter addresses itself to this void.

Eva Mueller (1983), one of the first authors to address the measurement of women's

poverty in general and the role of non-market transfers in particular, identifies three aspects of women's poverty: unemployment problems, support systems and social attitudes. Her analysis of social systems will be elaborated upon here to further elucidate the concept and significance of non-market exchanges. She argues that non-market exchanges "are flows of goods and services that do not represent compensation for work performed but are given because of kinship ties or social obligations" (ibid, p.280). A household may give or receive transfers. Mueller notes the persistent inadequacy in existing studies concerned with inter-household transfers as none of them focus specifically on *the incidence and amount of* inter-household exchanges to *various categories* of women in developing countries (ibid,pp.280-81, my emphasis). Research, she argues, needs to establish the frequency of such exchanges and to explain their concentration among households of various socio-economic categories.

It is speculated that the dearth of literature which elaborates on this issue is not necessarily an indication of the lack of importance placed upon such transfers, but rather points to the difficulty of quantifying and categorizing these exchanges. Mueller makes some suggestions as to how this problem could be dealt with through research. She suggests that people could be asked to report all transfers they received as well as all support they gave to other people in, say, the course of a year. If some approximate value could be assigned to these transfers, estimated receipts by those receiving aid can be added to, and estimated disbursements subtracted from (household) income[5]. In the present study the emphasis was however not on

[5]This exercise, while useful for quantitative purposes, does not help much in evaluating the usefulness of such transfers for female household heads. Moreover, in practical terms it would be very problematic to attach value to certain categories of

quantifying such transfers, but on determining their frequency and usefulness as a means of relieving stress for the head of household in periods of dire economic austerity. There was no intention (and therefore no attempt) to assign monetary values to such transfers.

A few notable studies (e.g. Agarwal, 1992; Beneria, 1992; Feldman, 1992) which have examined the dimension of such transfers have all underplayed the question of *culture* insofar as it influences the occurrence of, and the importance placed on, such exchanges. Agarwal notes in the case of South Asia that these transfers are diminished in times of dire economic strain. Similarly, in her study of Mexican slums, Beneria (1992, p.98) reports an almost total absence of such exchanges, and her study instead reveals that the "continuous struggle of each household [to survive] seemed to be accompanied by mistrust and hostility towards [neighbours]." However, in contrast to the above experiences, other studies have revealed that inter-household transfers are a common practice among low income households (Rakodi, 1994; Mueller, 1983).

This then means that there are other dynamics which influence the occurrence of inter-household transfers, which could help to explain the differences among communities with similar socio-economic conditions. In the case of Soweto culture is definitely one of the key explanatory factors, and the age of a settlement is probably the other. In terms of African culture it is often expected for those who are better off materially to

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non-market exchanges. Mueller herself admits that it would be impossible to attach quantitative value on such important things as "helping someone to find a job, or to secure a loan, lending ... equipment and exerting political influence on someone's behalf.... " (Mueller, 1983, p.285). Besides, it would be an imposition on a woman to expect her to recall and record all these details.

help those of their community who are poorer. While in rural traditional communities people would help one another this way as a purely traditional norm of African hospitality, in cities this mutual assistance is used as a safety net. Thus an urban household which has received help is morally bound to give help in return in future, which in many cases is in kind as well. In terms of the age of the settlement, as identified in the case of Orlando, people who have lived as a community for a long time tend to depend more on one another as relationships become cemented over the years. The level of social cohesion and mutual understanding of one another's material circumstances result in increased interdependence among neighbours.

5.1.2. Incidence of Non-Market Transfers in Orlando East

Non-market transfers were found to occur for 60 percent of all households surveyed in Orlando East. Many families expressed a feeling that they would not have been able to cope in the absence of inter-household transfers. Table 5.2 shows that of all households which engage in inter-household exchanges, 33 percent benefited from these at least once a week, often more. Half reported that they had gone to ask for help from neighbours at least twice a month. All in all, the study revealed that for the majority (83%) of those involved in such transfers, these were very valuable. Life would be much more difficult in the absence of such arrangements.

Table 5.2: Frequency of Exchange for Households Involved in Inter-Household Networks (N=30 households)

Frequency of Exchange	% of Households	
Often	33	(10)
Occasionally	50	(15)
Rarely	17	(5)

Note: *Often* denotes once a week or more
Occasionally denotes once a fortnight
Rarely denotes once a month or less
Source: *Orlando East Survey Data, 1992-3*

While it can be said in the case of rural communities in South Africa that inter-household transfers are still to a large extent kin based, the same cannot be said of township families. Evidence suggests that female household heads less and less expect kin, whether residing in the same household or not, to assist with material provisioning for the household. Table 5.3 shows that 80 percent of the households involved in inter-household transfers expected and received assistance from neighbours and friends who are not related to them by blood. Only 13 percent were assisted by non-resident members of their families, with the remaining 7 percent receiving help from both kin members and non-kin.

The high rates of inter-household reciprocity in Orlando East can in part be attributed to the fact that the majority of inhabitants know their neighbours very well, having grown up together in the same township. In Orlando East very few households are new and even in cases of relatively newer ones it is often found that their integration is made easier by the fact that they were introduced into the neighbourhood by one of the old Orlando residents, so that even backyard shack occupants who are subletting

from owners and renters are in many respects considered to be part of the community.

Table 5.3: Sources and Destinations of Transfers for Households Involved (N=30 (i.e 60% of main sample)

Source	Number	% of Households Involved
Neighbour and/or friend (non-kin)	24	80
Kin (mostly mother or sister)	4	13
Both kin and non-kin	2	7
Total	**30**	**100**

Source: *Orlando East Survey Data, 1992-3*

It is therefore assumed that there might be a strong link between the age of the settlement, suggesting the intensity of social cohesion, and households' involvement in non-market transfers. A comparison of this factor between settlements of contrasting ages but similar socio-economic structure could be interesting. As previously mentioned, research in Protea, a newer and wealthier township in Soweto, revealed that non-market exchanges occurred in only a few households (15%) of those surveyed. This can however be attributed more to the better economic position of Protea households and less to the age of the settlement.

The unavailability of systematic data on inter-household exchanges remains a challenge for researchers concerned with urban poverty in South Africa. A better

understanding of how these function will meaningfully contribute to our continuous struggle to re-conceptualise the household as well as measuring poverty for purposes of influencing policy.

5.2. Women's Organisations in Poor Urban Settlements

The dearth of literature on the subject of grassroots women's organisations is surprising considering the ubiquitous nature of the phenomenon. The existing literature on women's organisations systematically sidesteps the analysis of functional, purpose-specific groups which seek to address the needs of poor urban women. In addition to being very few, those sources which have attempted to analyze the subject either look at grassroots organisations which are formed and run by people who belong to elite classes of the community (e.g. Caplan, 1985), or those with a strong political profile or dimension (e.g. Hiltermann, 1991), and/or those which while they are called "grassroots", do not exactly address the immediate needs of poor women and their households (e.g. Sen and Grown, 1988). Very small survival-geared organisations formed and run by poor women themselves have so far received little attention in the literature.

A purposeful analysis of the role played by women's movements in cities is important for at least four reasons. First, they portray the often untapped potential of poor people, in this case women, to help themselves, and therefore challenge the notion which views women as helpless victims of poverty and (under)development. Therefore, a better understanding of such movements is likely to influence social policy so that programmes planned set out to build on existing indigenous skills,

interests and efforts of local people.

Second, as far as women heads of households are concerned, small grassroots organisations act as a useful material and social support system for women, especially in cases where the cause of household headship is either the breakdown of the household due to economic strain, and/or a sudden death of a spouse. Third, in townships these grassroots organisations help fill in the social void for poor, newly urbanised female heads of household. In Soweto reports abound of women who come to Johannesburg and neighbouring towns to join husbands or partners, only to receive a cool response or outright abuse. Instead of going back to the villages, these women often set themselves up as backyard shack dwellers and try to earn a living for their families back in the rural areas. The quickest way to integrate in urban life is to join existing township structures formed by women.

Finally, the analysis of urban grassroots organisations is critical for gender-sensitive programme planning, because by their nature and purpose, these are built on the principles of horizontal and gender-aware empowerment, these being the key components of a sustainable approach to authentic community participation (Paul, 1987; Moser, 1987).

The discussion of women's grassroots organisations will be approached along three axes which emerged as important in the present study. First, the nature of grassroots organisations formed and run by poor township women will be examined. In this case an effort is made to accentuate major differences between these and the other "high

profile" women's organisations mentioned in the opening section. Second, the actual activities, and therefore the importance of these grassroots movements for the daily survival needs of the poor women is discussed. Finally, I will examine the weaknesses and threats inhibiting the growth and improved visibility of grassroots women's organisations.

5.2.1. The Nature of Women's Organisations in Orlando East

While various women's groups which emerged had different and overlapping objectives (discussed in the next sub-section), a number of similarities in their nature was found. First, most local groups identified were founded and run by Orlando East women themselves as a response to local felt needs. There was no outsider involvement and no expert help, except in a temporary and situation-specific context. An example of such involvement would be when a group would invite, say, a community worker to come and address them on a specific issue of common concern to all members.

Second, their management style and administrative procedures are "horizontal" and informal, with members enjoying equal say in the running of the group. Besides two or three people who handle finances on behalf of the group there are often no recognisable and/or appointed officials. Members usually took turns in carrying out responsibilities, and even these were delegated in a flexible manner to accommodate time constraints and unexpected commitments on the part of members. There are inherent difficulties and weaknesses with this kind of administrative procedure, as the women themselves admitted. These will be elaborated on in the last subsection.

Third, most women's grassroots organisations concern themselves with minor (yet important) local issues, and they generally view broader civic issues as falling beyond their domain. There were some women in Orlando East who reported some involvement in civic and in political affairs (Table 5.4), but these were only a minority, occupied marginal positions, and were generally slightly materially better-off than the rest of the women sampled. Fourth, a number of women's organisations have a religious aspect, and this is especially true in the case of burial societies. In South African townships the level of poor households' participation in religious activities is remarkably

Table 5.4: Categories of Neighbourhood Organisations Identified in Orlando East and Women's Involvement*

Type/activity of organisation#	No. of Affiliated Women (N=43)	% of Affiliated Women
Burial	29	67
Savings	15	35
Savings and Burial	6	14
Social ("stokvels")	5	12
Savings and Social ("stokvels")	3	7
Civic/Political	5	12

* - the total sum of affiliates is above 100 percent because some women are members of more than one organisation/group
# - categories denote the principal activity of the organisation
Source: *Orlando East Survey Data, 1992-93*

higher than those of middle income status. Women's increasing involvement and participation in religious activities against the background of worsening poverty has

been highlighted by a number of studies (Wilson, 1971; Ramphele, 1993).

5.2.2. Objectives and Activities of Women's Organisations in Orlando East

The most common types of organisations in Orlando East were indicated in Table 5.4. It should be pointed out that while these organisations are run and dominated by women (numerically) they do incorporate males in many cases. Further, it is not only women heads of households who form membership of such groups. However, female heads of households are usually in the majority in these, and are often founders and/or group facilitators. In the case of those households which have both spouses, it is sometimes the male spouse who joins and pay premiums in such clubs.

In this section I discuss the main activities of women's organisations at work in Orlando East. For analytical purposes these have been categorised according to their principal activity and/or objective even though it is often found that each group is involved in more than one activity and has a number of secondary objectives. Four distinct categories of women's organisations discussed here are burial societies, savings clubs, social clubs, and those which perform civic and political tasks.

(i) Burial Societies

Burial societies are definitely the most widespread of all societies in Soweto. These are going to be discussed at length here since they are considered by Sowetans, and in this case, all women who were interviewed, as the most important. The significance placed on burial societies, or *masingcwabane* is a reflection of the high priority African people place on a decent funeral (Ramphele, 1993). Burial societies are clubs

whose main purpose is to provide their members with financial assistance when death occurs within their families. Kramer (1973, p.1) notes that these "arise out of people's desire to ensure that they will be buried properly or that they will be in a position to provide a proper burial for a family member"[6]

Among the households sampled, the majority (70%) of household heads took part in these burial societies. Some of those who were not current members reported that they had been members at some stage but had since dropped out due to economic reasons. All women who did not hold current membership did perceive the necessity of joining burial societies.

Besides their main objective of providing their members with financial support in the event of a death, burial societies confer other benefits. In all the burial societies surveyed for this study, the members were expected to provide the family of the deceased with *izandla*, i.e. help in preparing and serving of food at the funeral. Most of these societies owned their cooking utensils and on the night of the wake the members would help with peeling of vegetables and the preparation of food which is to be cooked for the mourners.

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[6]In order to fully grasp the importance Sowetans, and indeed most Africans, place on burial societies one needs to understand their beliefs and attitudes towards death. Conveying those beliefs, Barker (1972) comments that, "in Zulu as in much African thinking, the boundaries between the living and the dead are less hard drawn, less penetrable than they are in white thinking." And he further notes that among African households "the difference between a bright peaceful future in the home and a decade of trouble may lie in the correctness of the ceremonies of burial or of the return, one year after the death, of the wandering soul of whom who died" (cited in Kramer, 1973, p.1).

Burial societies are also regarded by their members as pleasant social gatherings. The meetings which are usually held monthly to pay the agreed upon premiums are hosted by the members in turns. On such occasions, which usually take place on Sundays (often the first Sunday of the month), tea and cakes are provided for those attending. I also attended a few burial society meetings where alcoholic beverages were provided by the host at cost price. The occasion is regarded as an opportunity to relax and discuss matters of common interest after the business of the society has been attended to. Kramer (1973) concludes that apart from their financial value societies of this type may be seen as an attempt to ensure a certain amount of "stability and continuity in a world which is all too unstable and insecure" (p.10). For female heads of households burial societies represent an indispensable means of social and psychological survival against the context of widespread unemployment and insecure incomes.

(ii) Savings Clubs

Savings clubs initially became popular in Soweto in the early 1980's when the building societies adopted a community-oriented approach whereby they educated people about, among other things, the benefits and advantages of saving in groups. This involvement was explained[7] as a response to the economic upheavals and massive township unemployment of that period.

Savings clubs can be found in all parts of Soweto, and they draw their membership from a wide range of occupational and educational categories. It might be expected

[7] There must have been other profit-driven reasons for the building societies' adoption of the community-orientated approach. But these fall beyond the scope of the present analysis.

that savings clubs would be more prevalent in communities which, while they are not wealthy, have some disposable incomes. Thus it came as a surprise that about half of the household heads sampled were current members of savings clubs.

The money saved by the club is not put away for the joint use of the club involved, as is the case with burial societies. In the case of savings clubs all members contribute agreed upon amounts (most of these quite modest), usually on a monthly basis. This sum is then put into a joint bank account by those office bearers chosen for this kind of task. The particular use of clubs of this nature is that members are allowed to borrow limited amounts from the club account if they have a family crisis, such as death, hospitalisation or imprisonment of a relative.

They are also useful because they encourage members to save something from their meagre incomes. They would otherwise find it difficult to do this as individuals. Like burial societies and other clubs of this nature, savings clubs are used as an avenue by women to discuss local issues of common concern and to further strengthen their social networks. Also, like burial societies, it was found that membership to these clubs was not confined to Orlando East, with some members being drawn from other neighbouring Soweto townships.

(iii) Social Clubs

These are particularly popular among the younger women in the township. The very poor were however not always able to take part in these due to their mode of operation which is very much geared towards material competition among members.

Better known as *stokvels, imigalelo* or *imiholiswano* in township lingo, they are also referred to as "kitchen parties" among the better-off Africans. This change of the term is generally believed to be an attempt by this category of *stokvel* goers to dissociate themselves with the widespread negative image of conventional *stokvels* which the older folk in the township associate with excessive alcohol intake, knife stabbings and gun-slinging, as well as lifestyles which are generally viewed as almost sleazy. It should be pointed out however, that the above view of these clubs is not always a fair one, as this study established. As it was observed, some *stokvels* are run in a fairly responsible manner.

The membership of *stokvels* in Orlando East, and in the rest of Soweto, can be mixed, but most of those I had contact with during this study were organised along gender lines.

Imigalelo are organised around the principle of saving. However, they differ from savings clubs because each member can decide whether to save or to do something else with her lump sum of money when her turn comes. There are two further differences between *imigalelo* and savings clubs. First, instead of banking all the finances collected, they operate on a rotational credit system whereby members take turns to receive a lump sum of contributions made by fellow members. Second, social clubs put a very strong emphasis on general enjoyment and creating a party atmosphere whereby a member whose turn it is to receive the money hosts the event.

Imigalelo differ largely in size of membership, levels of contributions and

sophistication. Those identified in Orlando East were small in size and contributions, possibly an indication of the limited economic capabilities of their members. Some women belong to more than one *stokvel* (Table 5.4). The most obvious disadvantage of *stokvels* is that the benefits for those who land an early draw are higher than for those whose names are drawn towards the end. The latter enjoy less real benefits when the opportunity costs in lost interest rates are taken into account (see also Ramphele, 1993). Furthermore, allegations of corruption and default by members who have already received their money are not uncommon.

Therefore, smaller groups where members know one another well are preferred to mitigate the problem of defaulters. In the smaller *stokvels* the level of trust is usually high among members, and quick returns are ensured. The groups of "women only" *stokvels* identified in Orlando East were small, none with more than twelve members, and all members had usually known one another for some time. In a case where there was a newer club member, or one who was a non-Orlando East resident, the requirement was that she would have to be introduced to the group by one of the long-standing members of the club.

On a psycho-social level, *stokvels* provide an avenue in which women are able to enjoy a level of temporary independence either from their partners or dependants. For many women interviewed *stokvels* are viewed as the only source of leisure which they enjoy while they manage to save some money. On the whole, the person who is hosting the party does not incur any losses because people who attend pay for their food and drinks.

(iv) Civic/Political Organisations

Civic groups would normally not be classified in the same category as political groups. The reason for classifying them together in this study is that it is thought that there is only a thin dividing line between these two in terms of the actual functions which they perform in the townships. The only identifiable difference between the civics and political groups is their administration and geographical scope. While the Orlando Civic Association is administered by Orlando residents and deals with specific civic issues in Orlando East, small political groups such as the political party-aligned street committees and party-aligned women's groups are part of Soweto-wide administrative structures, and as such, they are not accountable to one specific township[8].

Among the women interviewed in Orlando East it was found that affiliation to these organisations was rather minimal, with only 10 percent of the sample involved. Most women felt that the tasks performed by civics and township political groups were not directly relevant to the daily survival problems of their households. This finding was in direct contrast to the emphasis on political group affiliation by women from Protea, which is of a higher income status than Orlando East. In the Protea survey 65% of women were affiliated to the ANC and/or to one or more of its affiliated unions.

This should however not be taken to mean that political awareness and participation by women is higher among middle income groups. Rather, it is possibly an indication

[8] In other words, while they deal with local issues in respective townships, street committees are accountable to Soweto-wide party political structures such as the PAC or the ANC.

that higher income women who have stable predictable employment have more time and energy to devote to community issues beyond the basic level of survival. But even those women who are involved in political structures rarely get appointed to leadership positions in such structures (see also Seekings, 1992; Gwagwa, 1992). While women have demonstrated their abilities of running and managing community structures they remain concentrated in rank and file membership positions in civic and political structures working within the townships (Gwagwa, 1992).

Poor women's minimal involvement in civic and political structures is regrettable considering their productive, reproductive and community management roles which places them in a position of resourcefulness which would highly benefit the functioning of these structures (also see Moser, 1987). Yet it is not only time constraints which restrict the active participation of poor women in these organisations. The specific nature of civic and township politics, as well as a range of constraints imposed by patriarchal gender ideologies, also make it difficult and sometimes impossible for women to play a central role. For instance, their extensive mobilization around various civic issues is often destabilized as township politics degenerate into violent confrontations.

Many poor women therefore, their hands already full in their efforts to ensure subsistence for their households, tended to leave, for the most part, civic and political affairs to the hands of men and youth (see also Seekings, 1992). This general lack of participation does not however signal women's opposition or indifference to these structures. On the contrary, these enjoy a lot of support and much credibility among

most members of the community.

To conclude, the final section will address itself briefly to general threats and obstacles facing the women's organisations discussed above.

5.2.3. Threats and Obstacles Facing Women's Organisations in the Townships

While township women's organisations perform valuable tasks for their members, their usefulness as a survival strategy should not be romanticised. Women's organisations mentioned above face a range of constraints, most of which are explicable in class and gender terms. The poverty of women, made worse by debilitating patriarchal structures, has been the main problem limiting the optimum functioning of these organisations. The unfamiliarity of these women with the public arena, resulting partly from their association with the domestic sphere, means that they have to keep their organisations small and private to protect themselves. Besides, women do not have enough time to invest on the organisational aspects of their organisations because of their incessant household responsibilities.

Another very widespread difficulty faced by women's organisations in the townships is their inadequate resource base, reflecting the subordinate economic position of its membership. Many burial societies, for example, have a great potential to grow judging by the commitment of their members. But financial constraints of individual members often compel them to keep their groups small. As a result, they fail to take advantage of useful burial schemes offered by funeral undertakers to bigger reputable burial societies.

Third, because they are organised around the principle of horizontal and informal participation, almost all women's organisations identified were found to be lacking in sound organisational structure. This situation poses two sets of problems for these organisations. First, on the one hand those who have positions of facilitating the organisations do not know when and how to delegate, and on the other, women are reluctant to perform tasks delegated to them for fear of reflecting inequalities which are characteristic of the bigger elitist women's organisations (see also Sen and Grown, 1988). Second, this situation does not help to improve visibility of these organisations and the work they perform because of the absence of identifiable leaders. It is small wonder then that very little has been recorded about the work of such groups.

Another problem is the low levels of education of members of women's grassroots organisations. Of the women identified in Orlando East only a handful (34 percent) had a few years of secondary education. While this aspect should not be exaggerated, the low literacy levels of members of savings clubs and burial societies in particular, mean that they are often compelled to rely fully on outside assistance for financial and savings advice, thus limiting their ability to make informed choices on available options of investing their meagre incomes. Building societies and funeral directors handling the finances of women's groups have a reputation for self-interest, and they therefore sometimes fail to communicate the full implications of a certain scheme for members of clubs.

A further problem relates to the fact that some clubs, and this applies specifically to burial societies, have a religious dimension. The problem with this situation, a definite

cause of conflict in many societies, is that the churches involved are sometimes reluctant to minister to or conduct burial services involving those dependants of the society member who are non-worshippers. The dubious link between burial societies and church denominations becomes a problem if the deceased person was not a regular worshipper.

A final problem, which affects all clubs where the exchange of money is involved, is that they do not have adequately constructed and legally binding constitutions. Because the contracts among small women's clubs are often based solely on trust and mutual understanding it is not uncommon to hear of core members who have run off with the club's money, or of people who default on their payments or do not repay monies lent to them. This is a situation about which members of clubs can do very little, except to expel the offending member. In men's clubs it is common to hear of members taking the law into their own hands when a situation such as this one arises.

Some of the problems mentioned above can only be eliminated if women are given necessary guidance by those committed to mitigating survival problems faced by women in the townships. But first and foremost, a full understanding of how these clubs work is a necessary precondition if any outside effort is to build on the existing knowledge of local women.

In conclusion, the level of interdependence among individual households in Orlando East, as well as mutual aid through women's clubs points to the need for researchers to re-conceptualise the role played by the household within the context of urban

poverty. In particular, it challenges research to re-examine the extent to which households as entities are capable of providing for survival needs of their members within the context of what can be termed as organic unemployment in South African townships[9].

5.3. Summary of Chapter Five

In chapter five it was argued that in the townships it often becomes necessary for women heads of poor households to form structures of mutual support to provide for the reproductive needs of their households. While it is accepted that a wide range of different extra-household strategies are used either together or individually, in this chapter attention was given to two sets of related survival strategies in particular which give us a more informed understanding of the situation of women in Orlando East. These are inter-household networks of reciprocity and affiliation to grassroots organisations.

The acute unavailability of primary and secondary data on such issues in South Africa itself, and the incoherent nature of existing data in other Third World regions have been repeatedly cited in this chapter. This difficulty has made it necessary to adopt a narrow focus, and has unfortunately robbed the analysis of a more rounded and a deeper discussion which would have situated the Soweto findings within a broader

[9] In South African townships it is difficult for a very large proportion of the population to escape the cycle of poverty and unemployment. The low levels of education of most parents renders it problematic for them to educate their children to levels which would guarantee them a place in well paid jobs. University degrees and prestigious jobs which go with them have been enjoyed by only a few urban Africans who have escaped the net of poverty.

Third World urban context.

In assessing the role played by inter-household networks, it was emphasised that in order to understand urban poverty and women's roles within it, we need to move beyond the household itself. Further, it was suggested that it would be of great use to examine a range of factors which contribute to the differential emphasis placed on non-market exchanges by different communities with similar economic status. In that regard the question of culture as well as the age of the settlement were brought forward as some, although not the only, contributory factors. With regard to the present study these were found to be central in explaining the importance placed on these flows.

The chapter also discussed at some length women's affiliation to grassroots organisations for purposes of survival. These organisations, it was argued, are not only important in so far as they afford material support for their members, but also because they provide social and psychological avenues for women where they are able to confront issues of common concern. The nature and objectives of these clubs were briefly discussed and the obstacles they face were identified. The major emphasis of this analysis was that the existence of these organisations is a challenge to the notion which places too much emphasis on viewing women as victims of family breakdown and poverty. The tenacity of women within these structures, all of which are formed and operated with slim social and financial resources, can only point to the need of those who work with these communities to build on these efforts. It was argued however, that this task can never be truly possible if the work of such groups and the

women's approach to it, from their vantage point, has not been fully grasped by those involved, be they researchers or policy-makers.

The chapter concludes that the invisible survival efforts of, and the level of interdependence among township women in South Africa is a critical area of research which targets low-income urban women.

CHAPTER SIX

HOUSEHOLD SURVIVAL STRATEGIES: THE EXTENDED HOUSEHOLD FORM

6.0. Introduction

Within an African context it is not unproblematic to define a concept of extended families. My understanding of an urban African household as well as research experience from the ground yields a more complex picture which defies any accurate and neat classification of households as found in literature (Murray, 1981). The analysis contained in this chapter seeks to answer the question: how important is the extended family form for the survival of urban households headed by women?

Before introducing and presenting the study findings which seek to address the above question it is pertinent first to illuminate some difficulties of conceptualising the extended household, with a particular focus on an African context. This will be done in order to create a backdrop against which the extended family has been portrayed in this study, so that there is no confusion between this study's conceptualisation of the extended family and more conventional (yet dissimilar) definitions[1]. The contradictions in denoting the extended family in literature has resulted in theoretical

[1] Extended family, extended household and extended unit have been used interchangeably here, but the slight differences in the usage of these terms in conventional jargon are being recognised. The alternative usage of these terms here is a reflection of the great fluidity with which African people themselves use the term of extended households. There should be no confusion as to the meaning of these terms once the concept has been defined for the purposes of the present study (see also Harris, 1984, pp.136-9)

and conceptual discrepancies, none of which has helped to put the concept in its accurate perspective, as the following examples show:

> "extended households... consist of a core nuclear or one parent family residing with other relatives who share in daily consumption and financial arrangements." (Brydon and Chant, 1989, p.136)
>
> "extended family [is] a multi-household descent group which is the carrier of values, emotional closeness, economic co-operation, child-care, social regulation, and other functions" (Shimkin, Shimkin and Frate, 1978, p.xv)
>
> "extended family is a multi-generational interdependent kinship system which is welded together by a sense of obligation to relatives... and has a built-in multi-aid system for the welfare of its members and the maintenance of the family as a whole" (Martin and Martin, 1978, p.1)

The above three definitions are not necessarily contradictory, at least not in terms of their functions. But these denotations of extended households defy any effort of constructing a conceptual framework for analysing the extended family form since they differ in the closeness of kinship relations which they encompass. The first definition for instance lays more emphasis on "a core nuclear one-parent family" as the rallying point where other relatives (not defined how close) come and live. In contrast, the second definition (Shimkin *et al*, 1978) lays no emphasis on any core family, but rather regards a cluster of households composed of related people as an extended family. They do not mention anything about members of these "multi-households" residing together to facilitate the execution of functions mentioned. Further, the third definition (Martin and Martin, 1978), is what has probably been referred to as a clan[2] within an African context (Ottonberg, 1960), and certainly not

[2] For example, the Ottonbergs (1960) have defined a clan as "a unilineal descent group whose members claim common descent from an original ancestor....." (p.30). They also note that "... clans are not [always] corporate in nature, and they may be dispersed and very limited in functions." (p.31)

as an extended family. It also appears as if "interdependence" and "a sense of obligation to relatives" is more ideal than real within the confines of the above definition because it is difficult to envisage the mechanisms which would bind many generations together and render them interdependent.

One element on which these three definitions conceptually converge is their respective emphasis on kin relations. While the emphasis on kin is by and large accurate, it is not an inevitable component of all extended households. Many studies, including this one, have recorded household forms where some resident extended members are not related to the core household members by blood. Also, the assumed consensus and co-operation should not be taken as given. I elaborate on this point later in this chapter.

In the light of the differences highlighted in definitions of extended households, it appears as if it is more useful to develop a working conceptual framework which is situation-specific as has been done in this thesis. Apparently, besides the fact that extended households are bigger in size and more complex in nature than nuclear core households, it does not appear as if there is a suitable all-applicable definition of extended households.

Second, this chapter will seek to assess the perceived and real uses of the extended family unit within the context of persistent structural unemployment and urban poverty. The analysis will be approached along various axes to assess the extent to which extended households are an asset or a drawback for the woman head of a poor household. The issues examined here relate first to the nature of the relationship

between the head of household and extended family members, and second, to the reasons why extended family members join a particular household. The latter factor is significant because most of the much used literature on poverty and survival maintains that the members of extended families are incorporated for their potential usefulness for improving the material well-being of the household (Chant, 1991; Brydon and Chant, 1989; Buvinic, 1983; Murray, 1981).

While this could be true of many communities, particularly rural communities (Argawal, 1992; Murray; 1981), this was not found to be generally the case in the Orlando study. While some of the extended family members contributed financially to household budgets, many did not. We therefore need to seek other reasons for the incorporation of extra members besides economic co-operation.

Thirdly, the occupations of members of extended families are presented and critically analyzed in this chapter to present another possible reason why they generally fail to make material contributions to family budgets. The evidence from this analysis suggests that it is sometimes to the benefit of extended family members to be part of the household, and not always the other way round.

Finally, the chapter will attempt to analyze the consistency and reliability of contributors and non-contributors along gender lines. In a number of migration studies it has been found that female migrants tend to be more consistent in their contributions than male ones. This study also generated findings which point to the fact that women are generally more constant and reliable contributors to household

budgets compared to men.

What emerges with particular clarity in the study is that extended families are still valued within a large number of African households, whether they are in urban or in rural areas. There is a wealth of literature on African households to support this finding (e.g. Gugler and Flanagan, 1978; Kayongo-Male and Onyango, 1984; Peil and Sada, 1984; Amadiume, 1987). What is less clear however, is the perceived potential usefulness, in terms of economic co-operation, of such members for the survival of households. It would have been helpful if such literature distinguished between male- and female-headed households, because this could have provided a framework within which to analyze whether the tendency to incorporate extra kin is stronger among female or male heads of poor households[3]. The evidence from life histories collected for this research (introduced in the next chapter) indicates that female kin are the ones who incorporate extra members into their households for purposes of looking after those extended members. In a study of Mexican households, similar to this one, Chant (1984; 1985) found that female household heads are the ones who have more tendency to incorporate extra kin.

6.1 Conceptualising the Extended Household in an African Context

It is generally agreed in the literature on African households that the household form is never static but changes over time depending on a number of factors of which the family life cycle, and socio-economic changes are the most cited ones (Gugler and

[3] This study naturally did not establish this because only those households headed by women were studied.

Flanagan, 1978; Murray, 1981; Kayongo-Male and Onyango, 1984). In other words the same family can at one stage be nuclear and at another be extended. For this reason Murray (1981) warns against an approach which views a household in its static form. As already indicated, and as the findings of the present study confirm, the changes in household structure do not happen only for economic reasons, but for a host of other reasons, which suggest that while the extended household is not always viable economically, it may be useful in a number of other ways.

For example Kayongo-Male and Onyango (1984) highlight the value of extended families, but "economic co-operation" is only one aspect of the positive attributes they delineate:

> "The functions [of the extended family members] may vary but they normally include: reproduction, affection, socialisation, economic co-operation and religious upbringing".(p.2)

This definition of extended family functions points to the crucial non-economic roles that extended families perform for the survival of the household and may help to explain why extended families persist even in situations where they are generally seen as an economic liability as was found in this study.

Kayongo-Male and Onyango ibid also observe that:

> "households in urban areas have extended kin members in residence for years. The relatives may *or may not be contributing financially* or in terms of helping in the division of family labour, yet they are allowed to remain." (p.6) (my emphasis)

This compels us to look for other reasons to explain why extended households remain a feature of most African family structures irrespective of their economic value.

Other aspects of extended families which need more clarification are the differences and complexities in the way African households define themselves (see, for example, Gwagwa, 1991). For methodological reasons, it is crucial first to determine what African people regard as an extended family. This tends to go far beyond the concept as defined in most of the literature which usually confines the concept to kin-based relations.[4]

Murray (1981) addresses the above concerns when he notes that villagers in Lesotho use the concept of household membership with great fluidity. They either refer to *actual* residents [of the household]

> "as "those we live with" *("bao re lulang le bona")*, or "those who eat from one pot" *("ba jang potong e le' ngoe")*, or to *absent* migrants as "those who make us live" *("ba re phelisang")*. Collectively they may be known as "people of our place" *("ba h'eso")*". (pp48-49) (my own emphasis)

Murray explains however that the latter term may also refer "to close relatives [and I may add, to distant ones as well] irrespective of household membership" (p.49). However when an African refers to "those we live with" and to "those who eat from one pot", there is no suggestion at all that they are necessarily always exclusively referring to "blood" relatives. Frequently this is not the case, especially in an urban setting where support systems are often based on forged relationships, and are not given (see Chapter 5 on non-market transfers to support this argument).

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[4] This is in no way a criticism of these studies (which are not all based in African setting). It is also recognised that most teaching texts on such issues are still evolving, and concepts keep on changing as new insights emerge. Nevertheless many regional studies are not concerned with the local meanings of terms for local people, but rather are driven by the quest to find common definitions of terms for purposes of linking up studies.

In the present study, by members of the extended family I refer to those members of the household (beside the head) who are part of the household on a day-to-day basis, but who are not the head's immediate family such as minor or school-going age children. The children of the head of the household who are supposed to be self-supporting by virtue of their being adult are regarded as extended household members by the present study. The reason for the exclusion of those members of extended family residing outside the household from this definition is that the question of 'household headship' as well as the 'household' in this study takes into account the *day-to-day survival aspect* as well as the *organisational dimension* of headship and membership. These two aspects are regarded as somehow remote to those family members who are not co-resident in the household.[5]

This study also defines persons who reside within the household on a regular and long-term basis (not visitors) as members of the extended household.[6] These may include very distant relatives, neighbourhood/township folk, live-in partners, etc. This view certainly links up with what was mentioned earlier (in Chapter 5) that in a

[5] This standpoint therefore definitely leaves out those members of the household who are defined in Murray's (1981) study "as those who make us live", not least because in the present study the cause of female household headship as a result of a partner working and living away from home was not reported (see Appendix 2 Question 7 (f) had a zero response). But these "household members" are also left out because even in cases where there are some incoming remittances they were insignificant in markedly improving the wellbeing of the household, leaving the organisational aspect of household headship (i.e. budgeting of slim resources, non-market transfers, etc.) largely unaltered.

[6] The Basotho's definition of members of their family as "those we live with" *("bao re lulang lebona")* and "those who eat from one pot" *("ba jang potong e le' ngoe")* is a suitable definition of extended household membership as envisaged by this study (Murray, 1981).

context in which support systems based on kin are not the norm, support networks are often forged with people who are not relatives. The less cited work of Green (1978) stresses the importance of considering both kin- and non-kinship ties when conceptualising extended households in research. There is an increasing acceptance of this approach in recent mainstream literature (e.g. Selby, Murphy and Lorenzen, 1990, pp.100-4).

6.2. The Perceived and Real Usefulness of Extended Family for Household Survival

It is regarded as an important finding of this study that no household head in Orlando East reported that they had decided to incorporate any member/s of the extended family for purposes of economic co-operation. It is critical as well that very few of heads of households seem to have made a conscious choice of living with the extended family member. In the case of unemployed or homeless brothers, sisters, pensioned relatives or parents the trend was that the head of the household found herself in a situation where she had to live with persons who are not part of her nuclear family.[7] This is because in Orlando East what is regarded as a family house very rarely falls into private ownership of one of the siblings once the parents, who are usually the original owners, have died. In such circumstances therefore, household headship is only determined in organisational and economic terms. The above two findings are central to further study findings presented below because they throw a new light on the roles played by extended family members in the household.

[7] Note the definition of extended family member in the present study (sub-section 6.2 above)

It was earlier noted that whilst extended family members may not contribute economically, they may still perform useful functions. It is argued however that their roles should be placed in the correct perspective. This is important in studies like this one, which seek to analyze sources of household income and determine expenditure patterns, because there exists a grave danger of misreading the household budgetary position if all the incomes of all resident household members are assumed to contribute towards household budgets.

The members of the extended households were found to be valuable in so far as they shared the household chores, provided companionship, and for other reasons of which economic consideration is only one.

In the present study 76% of households (38) included people who are not members of the nuclear households. Extended family members in residence ranged between 1 and 7 persons per household, with an average extended membership of 3 persons per household. In these 38 households there were 112 people classified as extended family members. The fact that in the comparative study of Protea North mentioned in Chapters 1 and 5, 50% of the households surveyed lived with members of the extended family is an indication that the latter are not necessarily incorporated into the household mainly and/or purely for economic betterment of that household. All household heads in the Protea sample who lived with extended members were in full-time professional jobs, and were generally more gainfully employed than extended members, and were the sole breadwinners in their households. If the economic aspects are seen as only an additional consideration, or a positive outcome of residing with

an extended member it would have been acceptable, but a position which reduces this household arrangement to a purely economic one is difficult to support.

There was a wide range of reasons given by the head of households as well as other household members for the extended members' residence in the household. By far the most prevalent reason, accounting for 41% of the extended household members, was the unavailability of accommodation or homelessness on the part of the extended family member[8] (Table 6.1).

[8] The situation in many old Soweto townships and even more so in Orlando East is that family members tend to regard the house which used to belong to their parents as the property which belongs to all of them (i.e. to all the siblings). For this reason then household headship which is determined only or mainly by home ownership can be very misleading. This is partially why the present study has chosen to determine household headship by functions and roles (economic and organisational) of the household head (see Chapter 2).

Table 6.1: Key Reasons for extended Household Members' Residence in the Household

Key Reason	No. of Extended Members	Percentage
Family home	41	36.6
Homelessness	46	41.0
Pensioner (terminally ill or OAP)	4	3.6
Financial Contribution	4	3.6
Temporary (awaiting own accommodation)	2	1.8
Minor (orphaned/abandoned/child of extended member)	12	10.7
Companionship	3	2.7
TOTAL	112	100.0

Source: *Orlando East Survey Data, 1992-93*

This is not surprising for Sowetans (and other urban Africans) because the shortage of housing for Africans is extremely acute and is well documented (Mabin, 1992; Parnell,1992; Parnell and Pirie, 1991). Another very frequently cited reason for living in the extended household, accounting for approximately 37% of the extended members, is the fact that the house is the property of the whole family. This reason should be assessed within the South African township context, because in Orlando for example, there is a very high correlation between unemployment and inability to secure independent accommodation. There are very strong grounds therefore to believe that adults who have not secured alternative accommodation are deterred primarily by

lack of finances, rather than the unavailability of accommodation. It is therefore inconsistent to expect this category to augment household budgets even if they perceived their responsibility and were willing to make contributions in kind or in cash. Table 6.2 below shows that only 22 extended family members contributed to family budgets, with differing levels of consistency. This is only 18% of all extended household members and just 22% of all adult extended members.

Table 6.2: Contributions to Household Budgets by Consistency

Regularity of Contributions	Number of Contributors	Percentage
a. Regularly	16	73
b. Sometimes	5	23
c. Rarely	1	4
TOTAL	22	100

Key:
"**Regularly**" denotes predictable and reliable contributions, weekly or monthly
"**Sometimes**" denotes not reliable only when contribution is available or person is willing to contribute, the whole month may pass without any contribution
"**Rarely**" means a one-off contribution, highly undependable
Source: *Orlando East Survey Data, 1992-93*

The above findings clearly indicate that many female household heads did not benefit substantially in economic terms from living with members of extended families. It further questions the theory that household members are often incorporated into the household for their perceived economic and material contribution to household budgets. In this study only 4 persons (3% of the sample) were reported to have been incorporated into the household partly in order to ease the economic burdens of the heads. Instead, actual reasons for residing with extended household members do not

seem to be guided by much choice (least of all economic) on the part of the head of the receiving household, but seem to point to the dire circumstances relating largely to poverty induced by unemployment as well as homelessness, both of which are the most well documented problems faced by many in South African townships (Chapter 4; as well as, Meth, 1988; Schrire, 1990; Nurnberger, 1990; Gelb, 1991)[9].

6.3. Factors Affecting Contributions to Family Budgets by Extended Members

The preceding subsection examined some of the key reasons why extended members join the receiving households, or why they tend to remain even when they are past the age when they should have been self-supporting[10]. The most overt reasons cited were homelessness and their perceived birthright to the home. The fact that only 22% of adult extended family members contributed to household budgets (Table 6.2) points to the burden faced by these households, and in particular the head of the household.

It is interesting however to note that despite the fact that only a minority contributed to household income, the majority of them (72%) contributed regularly. This means that most of this minority of households which had contributing members benefitted greatly, especially if it is taken into consideration that their residence was initially not

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[9] Many commentators have repeatedly cited the unreliability of both official and unofficial employment figures in South Africa, caused mainly by disparities in the definition of unemployment (e.g. Archer, Bromberger, Nattrass and Oldham, 1990). But it is generally agreed that the government statistics grossly underestimate the levels of African unemployment.

[10] It is increasingly becoming common practice in townships that young adults beyond school-going age support themselves if they are employed. But many of these continue to reside with their families if they lack employment and means to support themselves.

justified purely on economic grounds. Having said this however, it should be mentioned that many respondents generally saw the contribution of extended members as a contribution towards their own welfare only. In other words, no household head interviewed expressed an opinion that if (a) contributing member/s ceased their contributions, the overall welfare of the household would be negatively affected, unless they remained in the household.

In almost all respects it was felt that the level of household survival depended on other factors such as the number of household members with no incomes for their own upkeep, the size of the household, the means of income earning by the household head herself, and most of all, the level and security of her own income.

Table 6.3 shows that the majority (62%) of the extended household members were not employed. It also shows that the unemployed are the biggest category (60%) among the non-contributing extended members. These figures depict that unemployment is by far the key reason preventing a large number of extended household members from contributing to household budgets.

Table 6.3: "Occupation" Profiles of Contributing and Non-Contributing Extended Members (N=100)

"Occupation" Profiles	% of Contributors	% of Non-Contributors
A. Employed		
skilled	4	3
semi-skilled	5	1
unskilled	4	4
B. Self-employed (informal sector)	3	3
C. Pensioned	4	7
D. Unemployed	2	60
TOTAL	22	78

Source: *Orlando East Survey Data, 1992-93*

While failure of many extended members to contribute to household budgets because of unemployment is in itself not a surprising finding, it should be borne in mind that the female heads who remain the chief providers for the households concerned were also officially classified as unemployed. They instead garner their income through a combination of efforts (Chapter 4) to provide for their families, including the adult unemployed extended members. In other words, the unemployed non-contributing members have an option which the household head herself cannot entertain.

A further look at the contributing extended members, 22% of the total, reveal important gender differentials. Gender differentials among contributors both in terms of their numbers as well as consistency of contributions, were very striking (Table 6.4 below). This finding is critical in terms of gender ideology in the African context, and specifically in highlighting the significant roles which women play in the

circumstances of poverty. The next subsection outlines these gender differentials and citing available literature attempts to explain why they exist.

6.4. Gender Differentials in Household Budget Contributions

Table 6.4 reveals that 68% of contributors (15) were women and, very importantly, their household budget contributions were usually reported to be regular. The two women (9%) who contributed only sometimes are the ones classified as unemployed in the occupation profiles (Table 6.3).

Table 6.4: Reliability of Contributions by Gender (N=22)

	Male (%)	Female (%)
A. Regular	18	59
B. Sometimes	9	9
C. Rarely	5	0
TOTAL	32	68

Source: *Orlando East Survey Data, 1992-93*

In the Orlando sample there were no marked gender differences in the overall numbers of adult extended family members to justify the gender differentials in contributions in favour of women (Table 6.5)

This very marked gender differential in the tendency to make economic contributions to the household budget is regarded as a highly significant finding. It is in line with studies on migrant remittances, which have also noted that women tend to be more reliable remitters (e.g. Wright, 1993).

There are a number of reasons which may be suggested in explanation of this gender differential. One of the justifications may be that since women are traditionally[11] the ones who have the responsibility of "putting food on the table", they tend to be much more in touch with the consumption needs of the household. Also, the fact that household heads in this study were all women, could have contributed in producing empathy between extended household members who are female and the head of the household. These speculations are derived from my own observations and experience

Table 6.5: Relationship to Household Head of Adult Extended Members by Gender (N=100)

Relationship to Household Head	Gender	
	Male	**Female**
Parent	2	5
Sibling	15	20
Child	4	5
Nephew/Niece	19	8
Lover	6	
Mother-in-law		1
Brother/Sister-in-law	2	4
Daughter-in-law		3
Other: Distant cousin	1	2
Brother's Girlfriend		2
Son's Girlfriend		1
Total	49	51

Source: *Orlando East Survey Data, 1992-93*

in the field since, in instances where the issue came up, many respondents could not

[11] This in no way indicate my agreement to this practice or expectation

explain these gender differentials in taking on household responsibility. It is overwhelmingly clear in the study, however, that the heads of households interviewed generally considered living with an extra female member to be more useful than living with a male. This preference is explicable not only in terms of economic factors *per se*, for women also played a greater role in alleviating the burden of other household responsibilities. Thus in Chapter 7, where I discuss different aspects of household labour, it will be shown that while some men did help with household chores, the female heads of households did not consider this to be a norm, as they still expected females to help around the house (Chapter 7, Oral Testimony 2).

The above findings are more easily understood however if they are assessed within the widely documented patriarchal ideologies in African homes which enforce practices that discriminate against women within the household. These ideologies are fundamental in this respect because they do not only determine the division of labour within the household, but they also regulate the distribution of welfare within it. They therefore help us to understand better the dynamics of household functioning and comprehend the position of men and women within these units in all their forms.

6.5. Summary of Chapter Six

The principal objective of Chapter 6 was to evaluate the extent to which the incorporation of extended members into the household could ensure economic co-operation, and therefore ease the burden of production and reproduction for the woman who is the head of the household.

The data discussed in this chapter concur with most conventional literature in that extended households are valued in African society both in rural and urban areas. However, the study also generated findings which depart from the assumption of some studies that the chief motivation for residing with extra kin is economic. In particular, in this study it was shown that homelessness, unemployment and poverty compel extra members to join the core household even if it means a drain on its resources.

Suggesting that one possible reason leading to confusion over the role played by extended members in household survival is the discrepancy in the way extended membership has been conceptualised in literature, this chapter attempted to look into different levels at which Africans portray the extended family, and how these compare with literature. A portrayal of the extended household for the purposes of this study was then adopted. The main features considered were the survival aspect and organisational function of the household. This denotation therefore departed from the conventional ones in that non-resident kin were not incorporated, while resident non-kin were incorporated.

The main emphasis in this chapter is that there is no guarantee that adult extended members will contribute towards the household budget. The results reported from Orlando showed that the majority of them did not. The residence of extended members in the core households was shown by the results to be generally more to the benefit of extra members than to that of the head and her immediate family.

Another important point which was highlighted was the gender differentials among

contributors and non-contributors to household budgets, with women showing more consistency and reliability.

The main conclusion of Chapter 6 therefore is that there is no rigorously verifiable empirical evidence which indicates that the incorporation of extra kin improves the economic status of the household. The provisioning for the household in the Orlando survey, it was found, largely remained the sole responsibility of the head of the household. This aspect perhaps points to the futility of trying to apply findings of surveys cross-culturally and to disparate socio-economic situations. The findings of this chapter suggest the desirability of country- and culture-specific approaches when studying such intricate issues as household economies.

CHAPTER SEVEN

HOUSEHOLD SURVIVAL STRATEGIES: WOMEN HEADS AND HOUSEWORK

7.0. Introduction

Chapter 7 has two broad aims. The first is to assess the position of female household heads in relation to housework. In other words, this chapter will determine whether the position of a woman who is the head of household differs in terms of duties she is expected to perform within the household from that of a woman who has a husband or a live-in partner. In doing this I am trying to determine whether there exists any real power in the status of being a woman head of household, which relieves her of the obligations of performing most of the housework. It is a major theme of mainstream feminist literature that the key to women's subordination should be sought from their identification with the domestic sphere, and specifically with the performance of household work (Harris, 1984).

The second goal is to critically examine various domestic labour debates, in particular the appropriateness of conceptualising housework economically. The implications these debates have had or are likely to have for the (subordinate) household status of women, especially to that of women who are principal or sole breadwinners for their household.

Using selected oral testimonies of Orlando East women, this chapter will attempt to

determine to what extent the subordination continues to take place in the absence of a resident male spouse. It will be shown whether women who head their households enjoy real power (previously enjoyed by male heads) which, among other things, relieves them of household duties. In this context the perceived role and responsibility of other household members in carrying out housework will be closely examined.

From a materialist point of view, the work of Christine Delphy (1984) represents one of the well known attempts to conceptualise and analyze housework and elucidate its role in the persistent exploitation of married[1] women. Therefore, before launching into a detailed discussion of the oral testimonies, her arguments deserve some elaboration.

Delphy conceived of housework as just another form of exploitation by the head of household of a woman who is his wife. In this chapter I examine under what conditions this expectation of the woman continues or diminishes in the absence of the exploitative male partner to whom she is bound by the legal marriage contract. The section which follows immediately is a critical examination of the materialist explanation of women's oppression through the domestic mode of production, i.e. housework (Delphy, 1984; Harris, 1984), as well as its critique (Barrett and McIntosh, 1979).

Secondly, using the case studies from the survey, brief profiles of selected women and

[1] In her response to the critique of her work by Barrett and McIntosh (1979, Feminist Review, 1) on the question of targeting only married women, Delphy (1984) qualifies that her analysis does involve unmarried women (despite indirectly) (see pp.168-69, in particular)

their households, with a special emphasis on work they perform within the household will be presented. In presenting these portions of oral testimonies I demonstrate how women heads of households interviewed spend their normal day, i.e. what work do they do within the household, why do they do it, for whom, and, of more significance, how do they perceive their roles.

The third section will examine gender differentials in the perception of other household members' responsibilities towards housework, and to what extent these perceptions of responsibility are influenced by and have a bearing on the position of the head. In this section I turn on the power relations between, on the one hand, the head and male members of the household, and on the other her relations with other female members. The perceptions of women will be further elaborated upon in Chapter 8.

The fourth section will examine the two dominant views on household economies, "household-as-a-unit approach", and the opposing view which regards the household as a contested terrain where power relations, based mainly on gender, determine both the distribution of welfare and the division of labour within the household.

By now theoretical attempts and propositions on how best to conceptualise housework in economic terms are widely documented, but consensus on the technicalities of implementation has hardly been reached. Also, and perhaps more importantly, the perceptions of women on how, or even whether, they perceive housework in economic terms have largely not been sought or reported. This omission has possibly been due

to the fact that many studies targeting household survival strategies tend to treat the individuals within the household as well as the household as if they were the one and the same thing.

Highlighting this analytical error, Wolf (1990) writes that "any behaviour exhibited by an individual is *de facto* interpreted as motivated by household interests" (p.46). On many occasions researchers do not seek respondents' rationale for their behaviour on the grounds that "informants are seldom capable of fully specifying their cultural knowledge, goals or strategies as such" (Guest, 1989, cited by Wolf, ibid, p.46). Such sentiments, however, are not supported by the experiences of those researchers who have set out to apply qualitative approaches in eliciting people's views. It is by now widely accepted that the depth and vitality offered by qualitative approaches such as life histories allow for the expression of respondents' opinions which, in the past, researchers committed only to one-tracked quantitative surveys regarded as secondary.

7.1. Women and Housework: A Materialist Analysis and Beyond[2]

In explaining the classical and persistent association of women with the domestic sphere, a materialist approach is considered pertinent because it does not only explain the exploitative relations based on gender within the household, but it also draws our

[2] There has been a great shift in feminist theorising, sometimes justifiably (see for example, Barrett and Phillips, 1992). My insistence on materialism does not stem from insensitivity to these theoretical u-turns or even from my unqualified adoption of materialism as such. However, Delphy's contributions to the domestic labour debate, have indeed been provocative judging from the responses of other contributors to the debate. For one thing, Delphy's model, like other countless feminist approaches, is based on western experience. Therefore, the aspects chosen within the broader approach best explain the points I am trying to make.

attention to economic aspects of this relationship (Barrett and McIntosh, 1979). Two foundations of materialism postulated by Delphy are considered appropriate in this analysis. She writes:

> "For me, the first foundation of materialism is that it is a theory of history, one where history is written in terms of the domination of social groups by another. Domination has as its ultimate motive exploitation. This postulate explains and is explained by the second foundation of materialism: that the way in which life is materially produced and reproduced is the base of the organisation of all societies, hence is fundamental both at the individual and the collective level."[3] (Delphy, 1984, p.159)

In this chapter the work (hereinafter referred to as "housework") I am concerned with is that which the woman head of household performs for the benefit and/or consumption of other household members. I analyze the work the woman performs for other adult able-bodied members of the household for which she receives no remuneration.

The domestic labour debate is fraught with analytical problems not least because the debate has been seized by various proponents who have disparate goals and who come from different theoretical backgrounds. The most obvious conceptual problem, sustained even by those who profess to have departed from it, is that of regarding the household as a unit of analysis. They neither attempt a breakdown of activities as to who does what work within the household, nor in what conditions is that work done. In reality however,

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[3] Since I do not wish to launch in detail into the analysis of materialism *per se*, this being beyond the scope of this thesis, the reader is referred to the volume of Delphy (1984) which is a collection of a decade's work, as well as to the work of Barrett and McIntosh (1979), and Young, Wolkowitz and McCullagh (1984) for other useful points of view within the domestic labour debate.

> ".... the household can neither decide nor think, since analytical constructs are not so empowered. Rather, certain people within the household make decisions. One or more persons with enough power to implement them make decisions and other less empowered individuals follow them." (Wolf, 1990, p.60)

Furthermore, the exchanges which do not go through the normal market route of exchange, but are confined within the household, are generally not regarded as work which should be paid and/or remunerated. According to this view the goings-on within the household are played down or ignored altogether, as Delphy points out that:

> "[according to this view]..... there are no individuals, nothing is exchanged or extorted from anyone, within the households, and consequently there are no modalities..... to be studied, since nothing takes place." (p.90)

It is the above view that Delphy, and those who are concerned with the factors affecting the division of household labour, have been challenging. This chapter addresses similar issues for it is believed that for the individuals who are involved in the performance of housework, the dissection of what goes on within the household, i.e. the unequal distribution of welfare is very critical.

This view has been criticised, partly on the grounds that it glorifies the superior position of the male household head (Barrett and McIntosh 1979; Harris, 1984). The critics highlight that according to this view "whatever demands husbands make, wives are bound to serve their interests" (Harris, ibid, p.145). Harris further points out that in her analysis Delphy only locates the subordination of women, but she fails to explain it. Also, Barrett and McIntosh (1979, p.102) criticise the materialist approach to the understanding of housework on the grounds that it offers no distinction between the situation of wives and that of women in general, and that its use of the term patriarchy is ambiguous because,

> "at times it refers to the system by which husbands appropriate their wives' labour, and at other times... to the domination of the father over his family."

To further elucidate her argument on the dynamics of housework, and as a response to the above criticism, Delphy introduces into the analysis the concept of appropriation to "distinguish between the person for whom a service is performed and the person to whom the labour incorporated in the service is appropriated" (1984, p.168).

The concept of appropriation is of particular significance as it helps us to understand under what relations of production a woman performs housework, and it clarifies who is the real and/or ultimate beneficiary of the activity performed. This understanding has a further spin-off in that it addresses the secondary concern of this thesis which is whether female household headship carries any real material and tangible benefits for the household head. This is of course besides the budgetary and organisational responsibilities, these being the criteria through which household headship has been determined in this study.

The concept of appropriation also assists in that it addresses broader questions relating to the extent to which housework directly or indirectly contributes to the advancement of capital. To this end, this concept compels us to re-open the questions relating to the possibility and desirability of economically viewing housework, and measuring its contribution accordingly. The position of radical feminists and gender ideologues regarding the nature of housework is unambiguous. For instance, Delphy (1984) notes that:

> "[housework] must be defined as a certain work relationship, a particular

> relationship of production [because] it is all the work done unpaid for others within the confines of the household" (p.90).

Ginwala *et al* (1990) take the point further as they emphasise not merely the economic nature of housework as it is appropriated by other household members, but they also point out the interdependence between unpaid housework and the more visible production sphere of the economy. They note that:

> "[in less developed countries in particular] the extra work may stretch women to the breaking point... When economic stress increases the relative importance of unpaid work for survival, women bear the brunt" (p.24).

Writers from different angles, particularly marxist feminists, strongly agree that the relations within which housework is done should be framed in economic terms, not least because the same relations of production are at play within the paid capitalist economy. The practicalities of realising the above sentiments are still fraught with difficulties, mainly because some women who are said to be subordinated tend to regard their position as divinely ordained, or biologically and/or even economically rational (Kabeer, 1991). The oral testimonies presented in this chapter communicate clearly this pathetic state of powerlessness.

At a household level, there is a need to identify first, who appropriates the unpaid labour which is performed, and second, we have to trace and account for the basis of power which enables whoever appropriates the fruits of the said labour. It has been noted however that it is very difficult to locate the gender-based form of power and subordination within the household because these are built into relations which are taken as given.

In literature it is generally agreed that male heads of households, and in their absence other male relatives or affictive[?] kin are the ones who appropriate the fruits of labour produced unpaid by the woman head or other female household members. Some would argue that the work which a person does for their household should not be paid since it is done for the reproduction of and consumption by the members of the household themselves. Yet, a casual examination of the relations of production within which the work is done helps us to realise that the range of activities performed by women are not only unpaid, but they are also unremunerated because returns for the woman in the form of welfare are either inadequate or absent. This situation happens specifically in cases where the fruits of that labour accrue to those members of the household who otherwise would have had to perform the work themselves.

For example, the work which the woman head of household performs for the benefit of her children, disabled relatives and the elderly cannot be regarded as exploitative, because despite the fact that the "services [are being] applied to children [for example], they are not appropriated by them, but by the person who would have to perform (half of) the work" had the woman not done the totality (Delphy, 1984, p.168). In Delphy's analysis this person would have been the husband, and by implication these are often the male members of the household, in the absence of the former.

In terms of the present study women who are faced with such a situation are variously exploited because they are also responsible for the budgetary (i.e productive) function within the household. This means that despite having assumed the role of household

head by virtue of earning a living for the household, which sometimes has male members, the responsibility of housework does not automatically get shifted to other household members. The realisation that women heads of households perform housework over and above their budgetary and organisational responsibilities dents the argument that there is a distinct division of labour within the household whereby women are expected to perform housework, while men provide a living through wage labour. It also confirms that these roles, far from being biologically determined, are socially constructed by the global ideology which discriminates against women.

This point leads us directly to the second point, i.e. the basis of power which has made it possible over generations for women to be associated with the domestic sphere. This ideology is so entrenched that even the most radical of feminist analysts cannot avoid some awkwardness in questioning the status quo. It is certainly no mistake that while different strands of feminist writers have rightly discredited biological determinism as an explanation of the basis of women's exploitation within the household, they have not been able to come up with satisfactory explanation of the genesis of women's subordination at all levels, but specifically and most fundamentally within the household.

The assertion that it is socially constructed is not theoretically or empirically problematic because there does not seem to be any disagreement on this from any angle. But this assertion is not adequate explanation, neither is "patriarchal capitalism", as some dual systems theorists are given to claim. That capitalism contributes to the exploitation and marginalisation of women is undisputed, but this is a separate

argument, at a different level, and it does not tell us much about the basis of women's exploitation within the household. The two levels should not be analytically conflated as this is likely to frustrate the argument which would question the genesis of female household exploitation (Horn 1992).

Delphy addresses a similar concern, i.e. the persistent confusion between different levels of women's exploitation. It is argued that marxist feminists have tended to confuse the subordination of women by men within the household with exploitation of the proletariat by capitalism. She asserts that this confusion possibly stems from marxist intellectuals' erroneous tendency to confuse the materialist method originated by Marx and his analysis of capitalism which he made using it. She therefore advises that if marxist feminism has to distinguish between the different levels of women's exploitation, so that they perceive (at least theoretically) housework for what it is, exploitative, they should first, "[apply] materialism to the oppression of women" (p.164) and second, they should review Marx's analysis of capitalism using their understanding of patriarchy.

By doing this it can be realised that the interests and positions of men and women within the household are not only dissimilar but they are divergent, and at last men as men can be seen as exploiting women's labour, instead of them being regarded as having no gains whatsoever out of the existing exploitative relationships, which are entirely blamed on the capitalist system.

Despite provoking serious criticisms on the grounds of essentialism (e.g. Barrett and

McIntosh, 1979; Molyneux, 1979), this analysis is useful because, as Harris (1984) notes, it "[draws] attention to the power relations between women and men rather than trying to squeeze sexual divisions into the pre-existing categories of political economy."(p.145). She points out rightfully however that the materialist analysis falls short in that it fails to explain the basis of this power. This dilemma, as it will be shown in the last section, is not specific to materialism.

The inability of various theoretical approaches to account for the universal association of women with the domestic sphere, has led to calls for a revolutionary theory and policy packages which will seek to question and transform beliefs about gender roles which take for granted as normal and natural a system which subordinates women (Harris, 1984; Ginwala *et al*, 1990).

In formulating policy guidelines for a revolutionary transformative economic policy package with regards to women's unpaid work in South Africa, Ginwala *et al* argue for a re-think of some of the basic categories of economic analysis and policy-making. They argue that most of the supposedly gender-blind concepts "need to be made more authentically gender neutral." They suggest for example that we should redefine:

> " 'labour' to include both paid and unpaid work....;
> 'work' and the 'working day' to include unpaid work, hence recognising and valuing women's total working day;
> 'women' as full working adults not dependants;
> 'income distribution' as measured among adults, not households."

The above guidelines, however, are in no way an explanation of why a global system discriminates against women. They instead are motivated by a strong belief that the attitudes which discriminate against women are socially constructed, and they can

therefore be transformed by challenging the values which accept the status quo. All those concerned agree that this is not an easy undertaking (Harris, 1984; Wolf, 1990; Kabeer, 1991). Kabeer (ibid) rightly points out that the process of transformation is not easy because it means

> " 'empowerment' of women [which] implies [the enhancement of] their capacity to challenge the 'given' nature of their situation; to recognise, analyze and act upon their subordination." (p.42)

The following extracts from Orlando East women's oral histories show that for different reasons women continue to perform the bulk of unpaid work within households whether they are heads or not. The oral testimonies' respondents have been carefully selected from the main sample to represent different age categories, causes of singleness, and differences in household size including dependency ratios, gender differences in composition and the phenomenon of the extended household form.

7.2. Women and Housework: Selected Oral Testimonies

The purpose of this sub-section is to document the activities involved in a typical day for a woman who is the head of the household. The following three cases are just a few of the selected oral testimony respondents who were drawn from the main sample (semi-structured questionnaire survey). To create the necessary backdrop the profiles cover some discussion of the respondents' extended family backgrounds. The names and addresses of the respondents have been invented to conceal their identities, as requested by some of them.

(i) Oral Testimony 1: Sheila Zwane

This case history is based on two interviews, each lasting two hours. Both testimonies were recorded on tape on successive days on 20 and 21 January 1993, at the

respondent's home. The original testimonies were recorded in Zulu, a language in which the initial interview was conducted.

Sheila Zwane was born in February 1938 at a squatter settlement known as Shelters, which was situated across the main road from where Orlando East currently stands. The squatter settlement was destroyed in the late 1950's, and a part of Orlando West now stands in its place. When Sheila was still very young her parents were resettled, along with other families in the then newly-built Orlando East township.

Sheila was the eldest in the family of eight children. At school she went up to secondary school. She could not continue with her education because she became pregnant at the age of eighteen while she was still a scholar. She reported that in those days one was not expected to resume schooling once one had dropped out because of pregnancy. As a result, she went on to look for employment after the birth of her son. She got married a few years later to the father of her child, by whom she had her second child, a daughter, and the last one, a son, after whose birth her marriage broke up because of "unending fights", resulting from her husband's alcoholism. Sheila divorced her husband in 1965. Her three children are now grown up and the two older ones have their own families. The last one still lives with Sheila in her house in Orlando East.

In her life Sheila has held only two waged jobs. The last one was with a factory which makes sweaters. She held the job for ten years as a machinist. She left the job in 1978, when the factory was being sold over to the new owner. Since that time she has been working from home, selling cooked food, soft drinks and liquor. Sheila runs one of the smaller but relatively successful *shebeens* in Orlando East. She says that the success of her *shebeen* can be attributed to the fact that she only sells to the older customers, and the fact that she keeps her house clean.

Sheila resides in a three-roomed council house with her youngest son who is 28 years old and unemployed. She regards her typical day as always busy, and this includes weekends which tend to be busier. Friday to Sunday are the most popular for patrons

who frequent her *shebeen.*

Sheila wakes up as early as 5.00 a.m. daily. She gets ready for the van which delivers her liquor and soft drinks. She then starts cleaning the house and sweeping the yard. She insists that the house has to be thoroughly cleaned daily because of the customers who frequent the place on a regular basis. It is critical, she believes, to be very neat because she sells cooked food and drinks. By 7.00 a.m. she is usually through with the cleaning of the house and yard.

Preparing meals takes a large portion of her day. While her son usually prepares breakfast for himself, she is responsible for cooking lunch and dinner, as well as for washing up after each meal. She has to cook two meals because both her son and the man who is helping out with menial tasks have to be "well-fed". When asked why her son does not help around the house, she reported that he only helps when he wants to, and therefore she cannot rely on him as she runs a business. She has to be around all the time to make sure that everything is running smoothly.

Also, the fact that *shebeen* patrons keep on coming during the day, means that she has to serve liquor and soft drinks for the whole day. She mentioned that she finds this very daunting as she has to do it on a daily basis without a break. She only enjoys a short break when her son has offered to help in selling, and this happens only rarely. She does get a break for a few hours on Sunday because she has to go to the women's social/savings club. Even then, she cannot stay out for the whole day, as she has to come back to relieve him so that he can go out as he always does at weekends. Sheila never goes to bed before midnight, and over the weekends she sometimes works up to 3.00 or 4.00 in the morning. These long hours are common for all popular *shebeen* operators in the township. The pressure of competition with other operators means that one is compelled to remain open as long as possible to attract customers.

Sheila mentioned that since her son was retrenched from work a year before she has had to take over his bills, of which the most expensive is R100.00 a month for the bedroom suite. It never crosses her mind (at least she did not mention it) that her son

has an obligation to work around the house so that he also contributes to the payment of his bills. The ease with which she assumed the responsibility of looking after her grown up son is not surprising, as it was found to be common among the women I came into contact with in the course of the survey.

Despite all the housework which she performs, Sheila reports that she enjoys more power and freedom now that she is divorced, and she believes that both her single status as well as her "self-employment" have very much improved her emotional wellbeing.

The above testimony points to the high priority which Sheila places on her role not only as a material provider for herself and her son, but also that she regards housework as her sole responsibility, with her son only assisting when he wants to. The situation of Sheila points to the difficulty associated with efforts of delineating housework, which is unpaid and unremunerated, from her reproductive and nurturing "responsibilities". Therefore if one attempts to work out the hours she spends on work which does not entail the normal exchange mechanisms (such as cooking her own food or making herself a cup of tea), it becomes analytically very problematic because of the spontaneity with which she moves between various activities in any given hour.

The efforts of framing her work in economic terms could further be compounded by the fact that she personally has never stood back to look at all her activities in those terms. She calculates as her economic gains only that which accrue from activities which she regards as "business". But other *necessary* tasks which she performs for the consumption of her son for instance, are simply taken as given. Further, one gets an impression that she views the work done as being for her own consumption, it does not appear as if she isolates her needs and interests from those of her son.

(ii) Oral Testimony 2: Thandi Tyawa

The interview on which this oral testimony is based was conducted for three hours on the 11.02.93 at the respondent's house. Orlando East. The life history was produced by the respondent and myself, no member of the household was formally contacted for verification or contribution. The children of the respondent were, however, aware of the nature and purpose of the interview, and they had an idea what was being discussed as they were moving in and out of the room while the interview was taking place. The original languages used in the interview were both Zulu and Xhosa depending on the respondent's preferences at different points of the conversation. The interview was recorded on tape and notes were taken on the spot.

Thandi Tyawa was born on 4 February 1947 at the current address. The house she lives in with her family is what is known in Orlando East as a "family house". She shares the house with her remaining siblings, two brothers, while the rest have their homes in townships around Johannesburg. Thandi is the fifth in the family of eight. Their father came from Natal, and their mother originated in the Orange Free State. However, for the most part of their lives they were brought up by their mother since their father deserted them when they were still very young. Thandi's father later took her brothers to Natal to be cared for by his relatives. Therefore, all the girls kept their mother's surname while the boys took their father's. Thandi has four children ranging between the age 27 to 6 years old. Her only daughter, third in the family, is fourteen years old.

Thandi earns her living chiefly as a *shebeen* owner. She also sells soft-drinks on a take-away basis. Her shebeen is much smaller and possibly less successful than the one mentioned above. She wakes up very early in the morning, usually as early as 5.30 a.m. She then prepares breakfast and gets her children ready, particularly the younger one, for school. She does the cleaning around the house and the yard on a daily basis. She reports that nobody helps her with housework because her daughter, the only other female in the house, spends most of the day at school. Her brothers, both unemployed, sit around the house or wander about the township for the better part of the day. The eldest son, who is twenty-seven years old is mentally retarded and

epileptic, while the second one (the twenty-five year old) has no fixed job, but is involved in a series of criminal activities "to support only himself".

Thandi does the laundry on a daily basis for herself, her brothers and her sons. The daughter usually does her own washing. Thandi's daughter also helps with the washing up in the evening because she believes that "she [should not] get used to wandering the streets". Thandi starts preparing lunch at noon, but if she is very busy selling or doing the laundry, everybody is prepared to eat just bread and drink tea. She spends most of her day selling take-away beers and soft drinks. On all three occasions I visited the house there were a few customers drinking beer outside in the garden. She reported that the customers increase in numbers in the evenings and weekends. Thandi's unemployed brothers always share drinks with the customers they know.

Thandi is not bitter that her brothers and her other sons are not employed because she knows that there are no jobs available. She is also sympathetic to her son's involvement in criminal activities, the most prominent of which is car-theft in central Johannesburg. On the day I visited the house for this interview, the son in question and a few friends jumped across the fence because they had mistaken the vehicle I was using for that of the police. When I inquired, Thandi was amused and reported that her son was currently on the run from the police for alleged car-theft and attempted murder. This does not bother her as she thinks such is the way of life for many young people in Soweto. She reported that over time she has learned "to deal" with the police when they come looking for her son.

Thandi highlighted the need to plan her day's work properly to ensure that she does not spend all day standing on her feet and in order to finish her tasks quickly so that she has some time to rest. Fortunately, her shebeen is not extremely busy during the week because there are six others on the same street. She nevertheless secures just enough profit which enables her to "put food on the table" on a daily basis. She does not have any money to save either in the bank or in the savings clubs, and she does not belong to any burial society because she cannot afford it.

The most exacting strain she experiences emanates from her sole responsibility for the care of her mentally retarded son "twenty-four hours a day." His epileptic fits have become more frequent over the years and thus he needs constant care to avoid home accidents. Her son is in receipt of a disability grant, which at times goes towards the expenses of running the household.

Thandi is aware that she is struggling financially, and she hopes that in future women in her position could be given some capital backing to start more viable small businesses. She supposes that if she could be helped from that angle she could come up with a more viable project on which she could concentrate on a full-time basis. She regards herself as extremely business-minded. She also hopes that when her daughter finishes high school she would be able to assist financially. Thandi does not have the same expectations from her sons, as she thinks men "are generally self-centred".

(iii) Oral Testimony 3: Selina Mphahlele

This testimony is based on a history which was produced on 12.02.93 and 13.02.93 at the home of the respondent. Each interview lasted for just over an hour. Both interviews were conducted with the respondent but in the presence of her daughter who took part whenever she considered this relevant. Both parts of this life history were recorded on tape, and the notes were also taken, particularly to record non-verbal cues as well as my general impressions of the exchanges as they continued. Original interviews were conducted both in Pedi (Selina's language) and in Zulu (my own language).

Selina Mphahlele was born on 17 April 1951 in Alexandra Township to the north of Johannesburg. She is the third in the family of seven children. Her father who worked as a driver died in 1982 because of both old age and a long illness. Her mother is still surviving.

Selina went up to Standard 8 at school and she left when her mother could no longer afford the school fees. She was planning to train as a nurse soon after, but this plan was thwarted by her parents' unenthusiastic response to the nursing profession, as well

as an early marriage to a man who "would not have a nurse for a wife." Selina regrets her early marriage and the fact that this robbed her of the opportunity to secure a profession for herself. The fact that the marriage subsequently broke down makes her even more bitter.

Selina and her ex-husband divorced only last year, after years of bitter fights, abuse and separation. She was awarded the custody of her two teenage children as well as the house. Her daughter is now 20 years old and has taken a year out after completing her standard ten, and her 19-year old son is still at school. Also living with her is her 6-year old niece who attends the local primary school.

Selina is presently unemployed, having held a number of office jobs since 1989. Her last job was with a Johannesburg law firm where she worked as a credit control clerk. She has basic typing and word-processing skills, but at present she earns her living by doing dressmaking on a small-scale. She gets her customers by word of mouth. She learned to sew in 1989 in a certified course which was organised by the government's Department of Manpower. Through her sewing, she has managed to save enough to erect the back rooms on her property, and she rents these out to tenants. The money raised in this way helps towards the payment of the children's school fees. The ex-husband assists with money, but this has lately become unreliable, possibly because he just remarried another woman who has her own children from a previous relationship. Selina reports that she is much more relaxed and happy since the divorce went through. She does not mind that they are materially worse off as a family, as she insists that "the peace of mind (resulting from her single new status) is priceless."

Selina does not do more housework than her children, instead they all work as a team. She prepares a meal for them only when they are not at home. Both her daughter and son take turns in doing housework, especially cooking and washing up since it has to be done on a daily basis. Selina only cooks dinner, but even then she does not do this everyday. Since her daughter no longer goes to school she also helps out around the

house. She says that as a family they have not succumbed to "township pressure"[4] of doing spring cleaning on a daily basis. For their household, sitting down and relaxing together as a family is considered to be very important, and they make sure that they find time to do this. If she is not spending time at home with her children, or doing her tailoring, Selina goes to Mofolo, the neighbouring township to visit her boyfriend. She insists that they date away from her house as she respects her children; he comes to the house only occasionally.

Selina belongs to three "ladies clubs". These cater for both savings, social and skills training needs. Every Saturday and Sunday therefore, she attends one or the other of these club gatherings. She serves in committees in two of the three clubs. (I had the opportunity to visit a few of the clubs' meetings as part of this study, see Chapter 5). Occasionally the family visits her mother in Tembisa Township.

She would have loved to remain married if it had been a happy marriage, but at the moment she is enjoying her space to plan her own life. For instance she is presently studying towards her standard ten certificate as she thinks that her office skills could be more attractive to potential employers if she has this qualification.

She hoped that the political negotiating process which was under way will result in better opportunities for women. She is resentful of the unequal status the society accords women and men. She says that in their case, the bellicose behaviour of her husband resulted partially from the fact that he has always earned more money than she did, while he had less education.

Despite her relative independence, Selina said that she is aware that women who live in households which have males are discriminated against, and they do work which the men could otherwise do if there was no woman around.

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[4] In Orlando East, like in many township households, people take a lot of pride in spring-cleaning their houses regularly, and sometimes on a day-to-day basis (Sikakane, 1977). The house whose front verandah does not shine makes for a scandal among neighbours.

7.3. Gender Attitudes and Housework: Evidence from Testimonies

The three oral testimonies presented above communicate distinct attitudes among respondents in the way they perceive gender roles and housework. They all demonstrate a level of awareness that women do more work within the house than males, and the differentials specifically derive from gender. But there are differences in levels of acceptance of the practice which discriminates against women.

In the case of the first story it comes out quite clearly that Sheila does not expect her son to help out in the house despite the fact that she pays his bills, over and above cooking and doing the laundry for him. Apparently, in her mind she fails to realise that her son as an adult and able-bodied person has the responsibility to pay his way, and to do things for himself, or at least half of the work since it is only the two of them who reside in the house.

Sheila's acceptance of carrying the sole responsibility of household duties, which include cooking and washing for her son, indicates that she does not only fail to question the situation, but there is nothing to question because she is doing what she is supposed to do, i.e. to run the house. If there was no acceptance of this *status quo*, there exists no apparent reason why housework is not otherwise divided between the two people who are its consumers, in which case it would then be regarded as remunerated. The similar attitude can be detected from the second testimony, except that the latter case went further and indicated in very clear terms that women are the ones who are expected by the society to perform the bulk of housework.

When Thandi (second testimony) reports that she does all the work herself because her daughter spends most of the time at school, she is implying that her daughter is the only person in their household other than herself, who has the obligation of doing housework. Also, the fact that she cannot extend her income generating efforts beyond the household level, since she has to constantly care for her disabled son, while there are other unemployed household members who could be helping out with home- based chores, shows a clear gender bias in perceived responsibilities towards different forms of housework.

The attitudes depicted by the above examples, which do not reflect the respondent's individual backgrounds as such, can be closely associated with African patriarchal structures which define nurturing role solely as women's responsibility (Young, 1989). The anomaly in such a situation is that the position of a woman within the household has failed to change to reflect her changed position of breadwinner and household head, the status usually associated with males. The fact that the majority of African women fail to question their subordinate position which relegates them to unpaid housework, is having devastating implications on efforts to frame housework in economic terms.

The third oral testimony, however, introduces a different dimension to the prevalent attitudes towards household work. While Selina is aware that most women in her position do the bulk of housework, she indicates that she has refused to succumb to that position. As a family they share all household chores equally. Perhaps her situation is aided by the fact that there are no adult males of her extended family

residing within the household. It is not clear what her position would have been if the composition of her household was similar to that of Thandi (Testimony 2) or of the other women I identified who lived with their brothers and/or their in-laws in the household, for example. It is also not clear how she would have handled the situation if her son had been unwilling to do any household work, as is the case in many households identified by this study, (e.g. Testimony 1 and 2 above).

Despite the differences from household to household, it is clear that the ideology which relegates women to unpaid work is very seriously entrenched, and is not likely to be altered overnight, and certainly not by a sudden realisation that housework amounts to normal work since it is geared to achieve the same goals, i.e. to reproduce and maintain the existing socio-economic system. Because of its importance, much can and should be done to improve the conditions of work and terms of remuneration for those who are performing most household work, women. A pre-requisite for this however is a more genuine understanding of how households function internally, as well as power struggles which are continuously at play.

There has for some time been a growing body of scholarship within and outside the economics discipline dedicated to the study of household functioning, and what motivates and determines the division of labour within the household. While the "new household economics" is in many ways a departure from materialism and other feminist approaches discussed above, like materialism it argues that there is a very clear-cut division of labour within the household. The main point of difference between the two is that the new household economics approach, neither glorifies the household head

as a sole beneficiary of labour performed (by his wife), nor emphasises the role of housework in subsidising capital. Rather, it "integrate(s) the production and consumption aspects of the household economy and extend(s) maximisation principles to its internal workings" (Kabeer, 1991, p.4). This (neoclassical) approach however falls short in that it denies the importance of the unequal power relations and gender subordination in the distribution of welfare within the household. The next section critically examines the major tenets of the neoclassical approach, as well as its critique.

7.4. The New Household Economics

Central to the new household economics debate is the conceptualization of the household *per se*, with the dominant argument, proposed by Becker (1974; 1976 for instance), viewing the household as one single unit whose activities are guided by the desire to provide for the welfare of all its members.

In this section the Beckerian approach is discussed in some detail. Then some of its criticisms are examined to reveal how it has sacrificed some vital explanatory tools which could otherwise address the question of gender inequalities in household division of labour and related power struggles within the household arena. While doing this I present the alternative view which sees the household as a gendered and contested terrain where the (often male) head make decisions and control the distribution of resources and labour of other household members.

The new household economics (i.e. the household-as-a-unit) approach assumes that

whatever goes on within the household is for the benefit of the household as a whole. According to this (neoclassical) approach no one within the household is subjected to exploitation, because even if there were differentials in welfare consumption within the household these are to be regarded as positive since they maximise the welfare of all household members (Becker, 1976).

According to Becker (1974), households are made up of women and men who come together through a marriage contract because of their complementarity in biological reproduction. Once the household exists, it functions 'as if' it was maximising a joint welfare function (Kabeer, 1991, Evans, 1991). According to this view the way the household labour time is allocated between competing uses

> "is determined rationally by the principle of comparative advantage so that each household member specialises in those [aspects of household duties] which give them the highest relative returns." (Kabeer, 1991, p.5).

The stance which stresses the welfare maximisation function of the household is however bound to run into difficulties because a casual examination of how households function reveals gross inequalities in the distribution of welfare within such units, and the assumed consensus is not supported by empirical evidence. Kabeer (1991) rightfully points out that,

> "the household can only be portrayed as a welfare-maximising unit if the distribution of consumption resources is also demonstrated to maximise the joint welfare of its members." (Kabeer, 1991, p.5)

This is of course not borne out by either qualitative or quantitative surveys which have sought to convey gender biases in the organisation and functioning of the household (Geisler, 1993). This is further compounded by the fact that "individual welfare" is very difficult to ascertain because, unlike factors such as household labour and

productive assets, cannot be priced since it is not a marketable commodity.

With regard to housework therefore, the Beckerian approach rules out any elements of subordination based either on age or gender, as it assumes that the division of labour within the household is guided by the principles of altruism. If inequalities based on gender are present in the patterns of consumption of housework these are freely chosen in the interests of joint welfare maximisation.

The most profound flaws of the above approach stem from the way in which

> "it collapses individual interests within the household into a joint welfare function through the assumption of total or partial altruism among household members (Kabeer, 1991, p.10).

The implications of this view for the domestic labour debate are far-reaching because this viewpoint does not only hinder any efforts to measure housework economically, but it rules out the critical dimensions of power struggles and gender subordination within the household.

Sen (1984) and Evans (1991), for instance, have criticised the so-called "benevolent dictatorship" of the [often male] household head, through which his view of the welfare of the rest of the family members is believed to be the one that counts (Sen, 1984). Similarly, Folbre (1986) points to the inconsistency of the neo-classical analysis as it accepts naked *self-interest* as the guide to individual behaviour within the context of the market, while it assumes *altruism* as guiding individual behaviour within the household.

Furthermore, most literature on gender discrimination within the household has unveiled inequalities with regards to health, nutrition, division of labour and general survival (Beneria and Feldman, 1991; Geisler, 1993). With regards to the domestic labour debate in particular, an assumption which lays claims on choice and altruism in determining who performs most of the housework has long been regarded as suspect. This is because the performance of household work for instance, seems to be more associated with just one category (i.e. women); whereas the appropriation of work performed is by another specific group (i.e. men). Kabeer (1991) aptly points out:

> "when the subordination of personal welfare in favour of the welfare of others appears systematically to be the property of one social category of individuals (women) while the beneficiaries of such preferences appear systematically to belong to another social group (men)..... then the notion of individual preferences governing household distribution becomes patently absurd." (Kabeer, 1991, p.11)

Furthermore, even if it were to be assumed that women who subjugate their needs for the benefit of the household, did so out of choice, one has to simultaneously examine what options there are for them to choose from. Sen's (1990) co-operative conflict model is convincing in the way it characterises the unequal power relations which exist within the household. Sen's model is useful because it emphasises that the household, far from being an undifferentiated unit, is characterised by gendered processes of co-operation and conflict between members. According to this model, therefore, there are both co-operative and conflicting outcomes in all the decisions which take place within the household.

Therefore, to assert that a woman performs more household work because they make

calculated choices to ensure household welfare, seem to ignore the limitations regarding the range of options available to her should household co-operation break down.

7.5. Conclusion

Having examined the data generated by life histories, as well as evidence from other empirical studies, it is hard to dispute the fact that women generally perform more work than men within households. A major finding of this study in particular is that while household headship for women has other benefits, exoneration from housework is undoubtedly not one of them. Even that small minority of women who reported that they were not burdened with housework, reported that they were aware that their situation was rather an exception than the norm (Testimony 3).

It is accepted that attempting to price and measure all housework, especially in the context of developing economies, and a situation of extreme poverty (such as that of Soweto), where most activities are principally geared towards survival in any case, is fraught with difficulties (Guyer, 1988; Sprey, 1990). A policy principle which regards housework as an economic activity of a specific sort would be a step in the right direction. Within a policy climate committed to the above, it will be possible to provide a range of social support services which could make life easier for those who perform housework, while inadvertently subsidising capital.

All women who were interviewed for this study mentioned as a problem the unavailability of benefits for the unemployed, as well as social support for those who

are involved in various forms of caring, which they regard as the function of the state. The second oral testimony (Thandi Tyawa) is a classic case of a woman who has been deprived of a chance for income generation away from the home because she has to constantly care for her disabled son. Her son is in receipt of a state pension, which is not enough even for his own subsistence, and which therefore does little to improve the wellbeing of Thandi and the rest of the family.

The policy measures suggested above can only be short-term because they are unsustainable, not least because they only address symptoms (i.e. improving the conditions within which women perform housework), and not the real problem and its cause, i.e. the interaction of patriarchy and a socio-economic system which discriminates against women. The total overhaul of the system, in response to the additional and transformed roles of sole female breadwinners, is essential in the long-run to redress the inequities outlined (Ginwala, *et al*, 1990).

A pre-requisite for the transformation of this *status quo*, is to embark on a range of empirical surveys, preferably culture-specific and localised, which will seek to uncover the mechanics of household functioning. A model similar to that proposed by Sen (1990) is useful in informing revolutionary policy debates, which disentangle the household as an analytical construct, as well as the division of labour within it.

The significance of Sen's model is that it encompasses a qualitative dimension of social reality. His analytical framework embraces such factors as the social technology of production relevant to household members, their perceptions and attitudes, as well

as the options left to them should household co-operation fail. Further, Sen's framework recognises custom and ideology as critical considerations in influencing the division of household labour along gender lines.

The above analytical framework could be of great value if it could be adapted to local situations, because trans-cultural studies are not well-suited to the understanding of intra-household dynamics, and can therefore not inform policy which seeks to improve material conditions of individual households. In other words, the household economies[5] of Johannesburg's poor settlements and those of the favelas of Sao Paulo are respectively complex and intricate, and therefore policy choices and outcomes affecting these should of necessity reflect this dynamism.

7.6. Summary of Chapter Seven

In this chapter an effort was made to bring together both theoretical arguments and empirical evidence to examine why women are associated with the household domain, and the performance of unremunerated housework within it. Bringing together materialism, marxist approaches and the household economics debates to the understanding of housework in this chapter it was demonstrated that ideologues from opposing viewpoints generally agree to the persistent subordination of women within the household, but they differ as to the genesis and outcome of that subordination.

The three oral testimonies cited in this chapter demonstrated, amongst other things,

[5] Kabeer (1991, p.10) refers to household economy as "activities, relationships and processes by which households produce, acquire and distribute valued resources essential to the survival, reproduction and prosperity of its members."

that the ideology which relegates women to unpaid housework is very deeply entrenched so that even those women who perform it have been lulled into believing that this is the way things ought to be. The testimonies also communicated very clearly that household headship, rather than removing obligations of housework, adds these on to organisational and budgetary responsibilities. The source of power therefore, which exempt men from the performance of housework does not trickle automatically to a woman who is the head of household. This also pointed to the fact that an ideology which associates women with housework, is larger than the husband-wife exploitative relationship dichotomy originally postulated in the materialist analysis. While it cannot be disputed that women are discriminated against within the households, it cannot be positively argued that men are the major beneficiaries of the exploitative relationship.

It was pointed out that there are logistical and analytical difficulties in introducing and attaching values and prices to all housework and its outcomes in terms of welfare returns for household members, especially in the Third World context. It was suggested that a gender-aware policy climate is much more likely to be conducive to conditions which would improve the context within which women perform housework. The policy climate needs to reflect the realisation that women who have added responsibilities of providing materially for households, because of their status of household headship, require supportive services to improve their efforts at providing for subsistence.

Finally, it was pointed out that such a policy will have to be informed by culture-

specific and localised qualitative surveys into the internal functioning of households. An analytical framework which recognises the dimension of convention, custom and ideology was proposed to explain how these shape the division of labour along gender lines within the household.

CHAPTER EIGHT

FEMALE HOUSEHOLD HEADSHIP: A SURVIVAL STRATEGY?

> "It is misguided, I believe, to ask of a life story,'What's the point?' Our task is precisely to attend to the story in such a way that we move beyond this question. There are no pointless lives, and there are no pointless life stories. There are only life stories we have not (yet) bothered to consider and whose revelations (including, at times, those of staggering ordinariness) therefore remain hidden from our view" (Patai, 1988, p.1).

8.0 Introduction

Chapter 8 examines the views and perceptions of some of the women who were interviewed for this study on the major aspects of their survival strategies in a township context in South Africa.[1] The oral testimonies used in this chapter were not chosen randomly, but were carefully selected with the main consideration being the level of sophistication and skill in narration by the woman concerned. Also the willingness of a woman to share her deep-seated views and perceptions was considered as a strength, and testimonies which showed this element were chosen for inclusion in the text.

It has been argued that the level of sophistication in narration does not necessarily render that story more reflective of fact (Portelli, 1981), and this kind of testimony is also not necessarily free of biases (Vansina, 1985), resulting from either lapse in memory (Keegan, 1988) or intentional fabrication (Crapanzano, 1984). In this thesis I have recognised the validity of these cautionary stances. As a result all testimonies used here have been checked against other sources (see Chapter 1), and they have

[1] The brief profiles of women whose testimonies were not used in Chapter 7, but appear for the first time in the present chapter are supplied in Appendix 5

been used not as primary, but only as complementary sources of data, aimed specifically at eliciting women's perceptions on the major aspects of their survival. While the testimonies presented below demonstrate similar experiences and common perceptions on major aspects they also portray a diversity in women's experiences and in the way they have interpreted them.

What this diversity illustrates is the fact that women heads are not a homogeneous, predictable socio-economic construct responding identically to their apparently common environment. Whilst, their survival strategies and their perceptions of life situations are influenced by their present common context (i.e. of being low income female heads of Orlando East households); an equally important factor is the distinct past which shaped their early lives and experiences.

The use of testimonies in this research, thereby seeking women's opinions, has been inspired by my intention to lend more meaning to themes addressed through semi-structured questionnaires. While the literature espousing the usage of qualitative research approaches is now common in the social sciences, an extensive reporting of undiluted oral testimonies is still less developed. In this study my seeking and reporting women's perceptions of issues and themes central to my research implies accepting that their views matter as much, or more than those of the researcher. This study has therefore aimed to document both the circumstances of female heads of households in Orlando, and their perceptions of their situation. The feminist approach which informs this study has necessitated that the methodology chosen challenges androcentric scholarship which largely fails to encompass and accommodate women's

lives as reported from their own perspective.

The way in which oral testimonies are written up tends to reflect both the discipline of the person who collects them, as well as the objective of collection. This of course has an impact on the "live" material recorded during the interview. As the researcher continues to discard, move around and connect bits of the original testimony to create the chronology and reality dictated by her own study, much of the wealth and original meaning conveyed by the interview is inevitably lost in the process. For this reason many researchers have emphasised that the collector must be conscious of her genuine responsibility to her "living sources" to ensure that not much is lost in the process of writing up oral testimonies in the final text (Anderson and Jack, 1991).

The contributions to Patricia Romero's "Life Histories of African Women" (1988) illustrate potently the interviewers' disciplinary influences and, more importantly, their varied purposes in collecting women's life histories. Scheub (1988, pp.7-46) for example, allows his subject to tell her story in her own words without any input from the researcher, except at the beginning when he introduces the subject. As a folklorist and a linguist, his expectations of a story differ from what a historian, for example, might expect. His interest is not only with the content, but is also with how the story is told, hence allowing his subject to tell her story in an autobiographical fashion. Because he is not interested in the mere accuracy of the facts, even pointing out an inherent mythical aspect of autobiographies, Scheub does not try to probe or to influence the storytelling in any way.

In contrast, Obbo (1988, pp.99-112) is dominant throughout the reported testimony with only an occasional voice from her subject. The story of Bitu, her subject, is used as an illustration of changes in Uganda's social systems brought about by contact with British colonialism, particularly its religious teachings and impact on the education of girls. The bits which are used in the story are only meant to substantiate the arguments regarding the outcomes of the articulation of western education and traditional Buganda ways.

In between these two extremes, Schildkrout (1988, pp.140-158), a cultural anthropologist, allows her subject to talk in at least a voice as loud as her own. Her research interest in material culture is evident in her line of questioning, as she asks her subject about her life stages which involve marriage, having children, etc. In her reporting of the story, she actually shows how her line of inquiry directs the conversation.

The questions these researchers asked, as well as the way they wrote the stories up in text were undoubtedly influenced by their disciplines, their own set of ideological beliefs, and what each wanted to communicate about their subjects. In designing the methodology, analysing the research findings and writing up the testimonies in text the presence of ideological and intellectual influences are often not revealed. Yet, the oral history technique by its nature demands of the researcher to explicitly state her ideological standpoint, and also to be aware of how and to what extent this is likely to influence the collection and interpretation of data.

In this chapter I primarily wish to depict women's own perceptions of their circumstances, thus lending weight to the findings reported in the previous chapters. I realise nevertheless that the "intellectual baggage" which I impose on women's stories inevitably creates a new understanding for the subject of her own circumstances. It is believed however that my consciousness and acknowledgement of my own agenda is a strength which has helped to keep my probes in check and thereby minimised bias.

In writing the stories of women, I have refrained from writing them up in a form of a monologue. During the process of collection I asked the women specific questions, and inquired further on points which are of interest to the study's themes. My involvement in shaping the testimony cannot readily come out if the story is told in a monologue. I have therefore presented women's stories in an interactive text whereby I place their views in a context and a commentary presented in my own words.

Townsend (1990) proposes an interactive method of writing up oral testimonies as the most viable. She notes:

> "What we want to know, and how we interpret a life history narrative, produce an interactive text *whether acknowledged or not.* The interpretation of a life history will necessarily be mediated by the questions asked, the frame of academic discussion imposed by the researcher. When the researcher's own voice, perspective and motives are absent, the text lacks essential defining characteristics." (Townsend, 1990, p.353) (my own emphasis)

She therefore rightly advises that since it takes two or more women to produce a testimony, women's stories should be presented as an interactive text. The interactions between the narrator and recorder are lost if they are not presented in a written

document, and the extent to which the written text tells us more about the researcher or the subject cannot be readily determined.

In the text which follows, I present the themes discussed earlier in this thesis using women's own words. Departing from the usual approach of oral historians who often tell the story of each of their subjects in full, while in the process illustrating various themes in that one narrative, I systematically discuss major aspects of survival strategies, and the views of different women are placed within the context of these themes.

The first theme to be discussed within the context of oral testimonies is the way women perceive their positions as single women. The women's own views on the causes of female household headship will be explored. Also the level of their well-being as single female heads will be discussed. The conflict between their subjective conditions as female heads and societal beliefs about their positions is also examined.

The second theme handled in this chapter is the value women place on the many forms of non-market transfers of which they are part in the township. It was noted in Chapter 5 that women place much value on non-market transfers as safety nets at times of destitution.

Thirdly, the extent to which the extended household form is valued in a township context like Orlando East is examined. Women's testimonies in this regard portray a level of conflict whereby whilst women accept that extended members are their

responsibility, they also communicate some resentment about the economic burdens placed on them by provisioning for extended members.

Fourth, the women's perceptions of their roles within the home are examined. What comes out with clarity in many testimonies is that while women are aware that they perform most of the work within the household, many do not perceive this as a major problem. Similarly, the questions of problematising the relations of production within the home, as well as framing housework in economic terms, are not regarded by most women as a high priority. While many are understandably displeased at societal tendencies to persistently associate women with housework, they portray amused surprise at a suggestion that housework should be regarded as an economic relationship. Most are not certain if relations of production within the home will ever change.

Lastly, women comment on the association of female heads of households with poverty. Surprisingly perhaps, many of them do not consider themselves as worst off. Those who think they are poor, do not link this exclusively to female household headship, insisting that household welfare and well-being, in Orlando East at least, is partly affected by the gender of the head and partly determined by material conditions that all low-income households have to grapple with.

8.1 "Singlehood": Its Nature and Challenges

There was a general consensus amongst all the oral history subjects that female household headship is on the increase. One important cause of singlehood they

identify is widowhood, but many believe that the breakdown of marriages account for a sizeable number of households headed by women, particularly among the under-fifty age group. Many blame men's lack of economic responsibility and initiative for the breakdown of their marriages. For example one respondent noted:

"I divorced because I discovered very early that my ex-husband did not like progress in life. He turned out to be a real drawback, pulling me down with him all the time. In the first six years of our marriage we lived at his sister's house, sleeping in the living room which was turned to a bedroom at night. He did not want us to buy a house, choosing to spend all his money on drinks..., and just on himself. Over time, tensions developed within the family, I'm sure because of overcrowding, there was no privacy at all. I then moved out to live at my parents' home in Orlando, he followed me there. But still he did not agree that we buy our house... Things went from bad to worse really, and we were always fighting over his wages..." (Musa Wanda, 42 years old, divorcee)

Another divorced woman views the breakdown of her marriage in a similar light:

"I soon found out that living with a man in the house was a drawback for me. I could not plan my finances properly because he made decisions about how I should use my income, whereas I was not entitled to do the same. And I did not know..... I mean never got to know how much he earned. He gave us some money if he wanted, and some time would pass without any money from him... He started getting drunk and coming late, and we could not discuss anything when he has been drinking." (Sheila Zwane, 56 years old, divorcee)

Because of her experiences, Sheila does not confine her views about the tendency of men to hold women back and to control their finances to marital unions, as she also mentioned:

"..... After divorcing my husband I have tried to live with partners [i.e.lovers] at different points in my life. It just couldn't work out. I just think a man is a real drawback to progress. I finally decided that I should just live my life on my own, without a man. And since I live alone my life has improved, as I now have the space to plan my life and my finances on my own. With the man in the house I would not have been able to build these two rooms."

The negative sentiments expressed towards men and marriage were not only evident among those women who are divorced, but also among those who lived with their husbands until they were widowed. A 58-year old mother of seven, who had been

widowed for four years, tended to agree with the above sentiments despite the fact that she never experienced these problems personally. She remarked that many households with both partners in Orlando East are sometimes worse off materially than ones like her own. She believes that women who have no husbands fare much better because:

"Once you have come to terms with the fact that you are alone, you are able to plan your things and budget sensibly, so that the little that you have stretches",

and to support her views she further revealed that:

"I tried to have a relationship after my husband died, but I found that it was a drain to the meagre resources that we had with my children. But I also found that he demanded all the attention while my children needed the same." (Fikile Shabangu, 58 years old, widow)

The above account also clearly reveals that misgivings based on economic considerations are not the only concern which women expressed against males. There is also a feeling that a man, if he is not the natural father, tends to compete for attention with the women's children. It is perhaps understandable that a woman who has been widowed when she is well over fifty, finds the demands of caring for another man may prove just too unbearable.

Further, the general perception of being better-off as a single woman does not seem to be always associated with the increase in household resources. Instead, what comes out in the testimonies is that the power and space to control the household budget is considered fundamental by women heads, and this is an important factor by which they consider their single status as preferable.

While male infidelity was mentioned by all women interviewed as a cause of discord

in many relationships, it was not felt to be as serious a cause of family breakdown, as the inability, and at times unwillingness, of men to provide materially for their own households. In other words the oral testimonies indicated that there was a level of acceptance that at one point or another a man will have a lover, who is usually younger, and frequently wealthier than the wife.

One woman, a *shebeen* owner, who is legally married, but is presently separated from her husband spoke bitterly about her husband's unwillingness to support the family (Her husband is an acclaimed and successful *mbaqanga*[2] composer and singer):

"I do feel very bitter at times... especially when there is no money in the house. When he first came to live here [in Johannesburg] I helped him a lot. We did most things together, and my family, my brothers, that is, were right behind him. He also helped out with money then. But when he became very successful, he decided to leave, and he never sends us any money. Not anymore."

Yet she joked and spoke easily about the rumours of her husband's alleged co-habiting with a younger woman:

"He does come to visit at least once every two months... He has never spent the weekend or even the night here for four years now [and laughing] I don't think he wants to, I hear that he lives with a girl your age in a flat in central Johannesburg" (Marcia Nkadimeng, 52 years old, separated).

This testimony shows the respondent's bitterness at being let down economically by her husband, but there was no trace of jealousy or bitterness that he now lived with another woman. This suggests that had he been supporting the household materially his departure from the house would have even been quite acceptable. This testimony depicts a belief common among some traditional African communities which is that a woman marries for economic security, and she would put up with infidelity as long

[2] *Mbaqanga* is some form of rock music with a deep African influence.

as a man is prepared to provide a livelihood for her and her children (e.g. Dolphyne, 1991). In Zulu language there is a popular saying which says: "*Ubuhle bendoda izinkomo zayo*", which literally means that "the suitability of a husband is judged by size of his herd of cattle [i.e. his wealth]." Whether the township women's willingness to underplay infidelity has to do with this cultural belief is not clear, but it was apparent from women's responses that economic security is a more reliable attribute in which a good husband is judged.

It is difficult within the context of these testimonies to determine whether the views women hold on marriage and singlehood signal attitudinal changes with regard to traditional institutions such as marriage, or the deterioration of male-female relationships and the family system under the strain of urban poverty and unemployment. The above testimonies, perhaps surprisingly in the light of the existing literature, do not depict these women necessarily as the victims of their circumstances because of the divorce, separation or widowhood. In other words, women's stories do not convey a pathetic state of helplessness as a result of being on their own. Instead, singleness when viewed economically, appears to be just another strategy of facing up to the challenges which women experience. In another study in South Africa van der Vliet (1984) has shown that staying single is a strategy increasingly being adopted by urban women who realise that men are frequently poor contributors to household budgets. Data presented in previous chapters, in Chapter 4 in particular, show that women in general still view marriage positively, with about 80% of those sampled having been married at one stage or another in their lives.

On the question of household headship, it was interesting that despite the fact that all women who were interviewed were either the main or the sole breadwinner in their households, some did not view themselves as heads of their households. Marcia, for instance, pondered for a long while when I raised the issue of headship and then reported that:

"No and yes.... No, because this house is not in my name, it is in my brother's name.... He does not live here. He lives in Phomolong with his fiance. I am the only person who is taking care of the house daily, and everything in it is mine"

Another woman who shares the house with her younger four sisters and a brother thought that she is not the head of the household because the house was left to all of them by their parents. Thus she reported that:

"We [her sisters and herself] cannot make decisions on making changes to the house as we have to consult with my brother" [who is the youngest, and was incidentally serving a jail sentence at a time when the oral testimonies were collected] (Thandi Munyai, 45 years, not married)

When I inquired why they considered it important to consult their brother who happened to be younger than some of them in any case, Thandi said that:

"Don't you know that a man takes over the ownership of the home when parents die? I do not know why... I am sure it is because women are expected to get married and leave at some stage... No, my brother never said we must leave, but then we don't know what will happen if he gets married. It could depend on his wife whether she wants us to stay or not."

There are various ways to explain the hesitation of women to view themselves as heads of households, all of which have patriarchal connotations. First, the fact that a woman, whatever her economic position within the home, remains a perpetual minor as long as she is not married (Bazilli, 1990). She can only have a limited input in household decision-making. Second, this ambivalence is linked to the society's and, perhaps, a woman's own expectation of eventual marriage (or remarriage) and leaving her family

home. Third, even if a woman is not expected to re-marry and lives in her own house after divorce or being widowed, there is still pressure to confer with her son or male members of her extended family before making a major decision, such as adding an extension to the house. Fikile Shabangu (widowed) mentioned that:

"I have been meaning to erect a shack at the back of the house, so that one of my grown daughters move out of the main house as we are very crowded. But their uncle [her brother-in-law] would not have any of that. He feels the shack makes the yard very untidy, and it brings down the status of the household."

For many women, the status of singlehood embodies the conflicts which they face. Their private personal circumstances within the home have plunged them into a position of main providers for their households. In the meantime the ideological beliefs concerning their status within the household and the community have not changed. Current literature on the struggles of African urban households suggest that patriarchal ideologies normally associated with traditional societies are still very forceful and alive in urban areas (Campbell, 1990; White, 1991). It has at times been suggested that patriarchal dogma tends to be more solidified in African urban residential areas as the newly-urbanised struggle to make sense of their suffering and to affirm their identities in an environment where they feel lost and marginalised (Ramphele, 1993).

8.2. Extended Household Members: Economic Asset or Liability?

In Chapter 6 it was demonstrated that women heads and their nuclear households often continue to live with extended members. However, none of the women interviewed for oral testimonies who lived with members of the extended family considered this to have been a well calculated economic consideration. In other words, the women did not report that they decided to live with extra members so as to augment household

finances. Also, on examining contributions by extended members to household budgets, it was noted that many of them did not actually contribute. While women agreed that living with an extra adult in the house may often mean a drain on household resources, none of the women expressed extreme bitterness about this as they see it as their responsibility to look after "their own".

Marcia, who lives with her daughters and four grandchildren as well as a grown up niece and her elderly maternal aunt, says of the events that led to this situation:

"One day I received a phone call from a distant relative, who said she had bumped into my aunt [who is 70 years old and senile] sitting on the streets of Standerton [a small town east of Johannesburg].... The following day I went looking for her with my youngest daughter. When we found her she was living in a shack made of corrugated iron pieces and cardboards. I had not seen her for 5 years... She was refusing to come home with me. I insisted. She was very dirty and frail and she said she had not eaten for days. I thought God would punish me if I leave her there and not take her home."

This relative, whom I met on two of the three occasions I visited this family, sleeps in a backyard shack which Marcia built for her. According to the family, she was not yet receiving her old age pension, because she lost all documents whilst she lived by herself for years.

Marcia's testimony shows no incentive besides her deep belief that it is her responsibility "as a Christian" to look after her aunt and those relatives who are poorer than she is. I learnt that her aunt has a son who lives with his family in another part of Soweto. For the past two years while Marcia has been living with her aunt, the son, Marcia's cousin, has not come to visit. Marcia believes that her cousin and the rest of their extended family have left the care of Marcia's aunt to her because they realise the economic strain involved.

Further proof that for this household economic considerations were not paramount in taking in extra relatives is evident in Marcia's comment about her 21-year old niece:

"She is unemployed at the moment... She is very helpful around the house... She still wants to go back to school to finish her Matriculation (Std.10), and I'm trying to save for that. She's my child. She is mine."

One could argue that there are potential benefits for Marcia in living with her relatives, in terms of household chores performed by her niece. But to justify her decision to live with extra relatives primarily on economic grounds is difficult to support. When I interviewed her for this research she had been living with her aunt for more than two years, and with her niece for three years; and economic gains were not yet evident.

The fact that the house she lives in used to belong to her mother, and is therefore regarded as the family house, may have contributed to her willingness to take in extra members of her extended family. As mentioned at various points in this thesis, the dominant feature of many households is that people who reside in the house often do not regard it as privately owned. Marcia might have felt it is her responsibility to take in extended members as the house is, after all, family property.

Thandi Munyai, the respondent mentioned above, is 45 years old and is the eldest in her family. She occupies a "family house" with her four sisters and a brother all aged between 38 and 29 years old. She does not regard herself as the head of the household. Yet, she said:

"Yes, I am the main provider in the house. My sisters' children look up to me for lunch money when they go to school. They think I have taken my [late] mother's place."

She did not show any resentment as she said this because, she says, she gets respect and recognition from her sisters. Yet, as indicated earlier in Section 8.1 above, she does not think she has the power of headship because she thinks her brother should be regarded as the head. If economic factors were paramount in her logic, she would not be considering it her responsibility to provide for children who are not hers.

Societal expectations and recognition of acute poverty and lack of employment and accommodation, more than economic gain, is seen to be at the heart of household heads' willingness to live with extra members. Just a year before I met her, Musa Wanda, a 43- year old divorcee, had been caring for an elderly "distant relative" for eight years. She told me of her experience:

"She was incontinent and senile. No one in our family wanted to have anything to do with her.."Grandma" had a grown up daughter who was in her 50's. She was also useless, an alcoholic."

Musa was receiving an old age pension on behalf of this "relative". But, according to her, the level of constant care which was demanded of her, far outweighed the benefits of the old age pension which "Grandma" received[3].

The only way in which Musa knew this "relative" was because

"she used to be a great friend of my mother, they grew up together in Matatiele, and they came to Johannesburg together to seek employment."

Further, as in Marcia's case mentioned earlier, this kind of caring attitude was found to be very closely associated with religious beliefs. For example Musa later told me in the process of our discussion:

[3] At the time of conducting this study, the old age pension for Africans was R295.00 (approximately £59.00) bimonthly.

"I think God wanted to test my faith. That is why I was chosen [by God] to look after "Grandma."

These religious sentiments are found to be common among women who struggle to find meaning for their suffering (Ramphele, 1993). The above case also demonstrates that the willingness to accommodate extended members is not necessarily confined to blood relatives. Some studies in Africa have shown that it is common for households to incorporate members who are not related through kin for extended periods of time. Obbo (1988, p.110), for example, concludes of her study of Ugandan households: "traditional ways made it possible to incorporate children in households without much fuss about circumstances of origin. Most often it was (and still is) difficult to sort out members of households without lengthy discussions which involve unravelling personal genealogical charts." In my own experience, I can positively say that this observation is not only applicable to children.

Further, the above testimonies portray that economic considerations are not fundamental in deciding to live with extra household members. They show rather that these household heads only respond to practical situations which they find themselves in, and they are trying to make the best of their situation which, as the data discussed in this thesis demonstrate, relate primarily to poverty, lack of education and employment opportunities, and therefore lack of accommodation.

While it was evident that they are conscious of the economic sacrifices involved in caring for members of the extended family, they accept their roles as necessary. Also, traditionally people usually embraced one of their own, i.e. their blood relations. In

the township context however, where acquired friendships are valued, extended membership does not necessarily always mean relation by kin.

Despite being a drain on household resources, extended members are a norm in Orlando East because of a combination of ideological beliefs and practical circumstances that people find themselves in.

8.3. Non-Market Transfers and Survival Strategies

In Chapter 5 it was shown that women value the networks of reciprocity which are operational in the townships as very significant, and often indispensable. While women in higher income groups use informal networks of reciprocity only sometimes, for low income female heads these are a daily and necessary feature of their existence. As already mentioned in Chapter 5, the networks of reciprocity which were identified were of two forms. They were either private and one-to-one or, in the form of well organised structures where women saved together or took turns in giving one another the lump sums of money.

In much literature on household economics it has been highlighted that women's usage of non-market transfers is probably more widespread than many studies have been able to portray (Mueller,1983; Beittel, 1992). For instance, Beittel (1992) has noted that in southern Africa a narrow focus on household income obscures inter-household networks which are a crucial aspect of urban survival. This has been blamed on the difficulties of measuring their material value and the extent of their contribution to household survival (Mueller, 1983). Whether they are measurable or not, this study

found that almost all women interviewed were part of very complex informal networks which exist in the townships. Fikile Shabangu told me:

"I know some of my neighbours who are much poorer than us, and if a neighbour comes here for help I do not hesitate to take the bowl of *mealie-meal* and give it to her, because I know that if I could go to her house it is 'cold' [i.e. they are starving]"

Another woman, Helen Sithebe, confirmed the existence of non-market transfers which often involve foodstuffs rather than cash:

"I help my neighbours a lot if they come here to ask for assistance. I cannot, despite my poverty, bear to think of another person having to go without food, especially if she has children.... Because I raise vegetables in my back garden, I give some to my neighbours who need them. I never sell my vegetables..."

None of the interviews or oral testimonies demonstrated that female heads were always on the receiving end of these transfers. They often gave as well as received from their neighbours and friends, which suggests that they were not always worst off materially. They were sometimes involved in non-market transfers with women who have partners. Also, it was revealed that these transfers were not limited to women who were unemployed.

Some respondents told me that some of their friends with working husbands or partners also occasionally went without daily necessities, and they were as much part of the neighbourly exchanges as female heads were. Helen Sithebe summed up the positions of women who have husbands as she saw it:

"The mere presence of a husband or partner is not by itself an indication that the household is better-off. What counts is whether as a couple you are able to plan things jointly. And if you aren't, you are bound to be worse-off than an organised household headed by a woman ... We help each other as women, to me it does not matter whether a husband is available or not... It is a woman who has to provide food for the children, and the 'master' [i.e. the husband]"

Sheila, a divorcee, has not been formally employed since 1978. She thinks non-market

transfers involve all women, married or not, employed or not employed:

"Actually, some women heads who are in full employment sometimes come to me to borrow money for things like bus fare to work, and I often manage to lend it to them. Some come to borrow for children lunch money if a child won't go to school without it. In saying this I'm not boasting, but I'm only showing that employed people are not usually better off, because the wages are so small."

She feels that the only reason employed or married women do not appear to be using the help of their neighbours is perhaps because they would rather not admit it:

"[N]eighbours are careful not to be judged by others as being very poor, so people [women] would not normally go to just anybody when they are in need of something. Often, one has at least one neighbour from whom they borrow things amounting to grains and other foodstuffs. For instance, in my street I have only one friend to whom I go when I'm needy, and she also comes to me. I wouldn't go just to anybody."

On the question of involvement in community structures like savings clubs and burial societies women appeared to be proud to be part of these structures, many of which are a result of women's own initiative. Fikile Shabangu told me how she sees the nature of her involvement in women's organisations, and how these have been of benefit to her:

"We go out every Wednesday at 6.00 in the afternoon. We go visiting and reviving people who no longer come to church, *the lost flock*. We also deliver prayers to the sick, the old and the blind. That is very important to me."

This church-aligned organisation has other benefits for Fikile which she considers as of more fundamental importance:

"In this Society we save a sum of money regularly, so that if something [death] happens to one of the members or their families we can withdraw from it. I like this organisation because my children will not have to worry about finances [for the funeral] if anything happens to me.... We work very well together. I think this is because we are a small club. Bigger burial societies always have internal conflicts because some of their members have relatives [unknown to the club] who die in places as far and remote as Swaziland..... [Another good factor is that]... most women of our burial society are also members of my congregation, and this makes the running of the club easy and smooth."

Sheila Zwane whose burial society is also a savings club told me of the uses for her

of the club:

"I try to save some money separately [i.e. independent of the club] but I find this to be very difficult. The most useful thing about belonging to a club is that one is compelled to save a fixed amount of money on a regular basis.... Because you feel you are letting the group down, and affecting the accumulation of interest... you have to try to keep up with regular contributions. At the end of the year when the money gets divided up, it really feels good to receive the lump sum of money which you have been saving over twelve months. I like the club, it has been very valuable to me."

Besides the economic advantages of the club, Sheila emphasised other key advantages:

"At the club I also meet other women. I've made a lot of friends over the last 13 years since I have been a member of this club. We organise occasional day trips and picnics, especially in the Christmas season. As a member of the club one never feels alone really."

In her view the club is the only form of recreation she enjoys because she said she does not go on holidays as these are her busiest (and most profitable) periods for her shebeen. However, she highlighted one problem she has with her club:

"This club is not purely a women's club. Though women are on the majority, the club is dominated by men. Men are often not interested in women's issues. Therefore with regards to this particular club, it is very difficult to bring up any issues which affect only women... I think it is important for women to belong to a club which is composed purely of women, and which addresses women's specific problems."

Despite the widespread popularity of women's clubs, and of burial societies in particular, I did meet a minority of women who had been disillusioned by all forms of informal structures. Musa Wanda was one such woman. She said of women's organisations:

"I feel that I need space to use my time as I please. I do not want my time to be regulated by ties and obligations. Besides, I can't stand another woman telling me what to do, how and when to save my money."

Another woman, Anna Nsele (widow), echoed this view, albeit for different reasons. She had belonged to a burial society a few years before, but had fallen out:

"It takes a lot of trust to give people, other women, your hard-earned money. I used to belong to one of the burial societies until 1990. But I left it because the society I

belonged to refused to pay for the burial of my brother because they said he did not live in Soweto [he died in the rural areas]. But he lived here when I joined the club... There is no justice really. I went to complain to the [Orlando] Civic Association but they could not help us because these clubs are taken as private arrangements... I do not trust them [burials]. I am still trying to recover my money from them..."

My observation was that in Orlando East at least, those women who were slightly better-off did not feel the compelling need to belong either to savings clubs or to burial societies. But even then I found that this category of women did belong to some social clubs composed of like-minded persons. This small category of women tended to be relatively young, with some sort of semi-regular income. Some of the successful shebeeners-cum-"dealers" belonged to these social clubs (see Chapter 5). Unfortunately I could not interview any "dealers" for oral testimonies because they declined. I did however have the opportunity to be invited to a few of the social club meetings which usually take place on the first Sunday of the month.

On the whole, the dominant view is that informal networks are very significant to women in Orlando East, either as one-to-one private arrangements or as big or small informal clubs. In particular, almost all women consider burial societies to be of great importance because of the expenses involved in organising a decent township funeral (see Chapter 5).

Furthermore, these associations are seen by women as the only forms of socialising in a milieu characterised by persistent hardships and financial insecurities.

8.4. Women Heads on Housework

As shown in Chapter 7, most women household heads continue to perform the bulk of household tasks despite their status as heads. Oral testimonies cited in Chapter 7 demonstrated that the absence of a male partner does not necessarily mean that women are entitled to do less work within the home. This could perhaps be explained by the fact that the absence of a male spouse does not usually mean that households are composed only of females. Two of the three cases presented in Chapter 7 portrayed very clearly that society tends to associate women with the domestic sphere irrespective of her age, her marital status and her economic standing.

In this brief sub-section women's testimonies will be used to show how women perceive their roles and what they think of the societal stereotyping of these.

It was fascinating to observe that women generally viewed housework as <u>their</u> work and responsibility and tended to see extra help as a favour which they should not expect or count on. Sheila told me of her situation:

"I am never able to leave the house for the whole day. Since I am selling from home, there is no one to leave here as I am solely responsible for the business, as well as for cooking and cleaning... If I am away for long periods of time I worry as to what might happen to my customers... I consider it my responsibility to run the house."

This is despite the fact that she shares the house with her grown up son whom she supports materially. She seems to have internalised the belief that everything is her responsibility, and her son can only help "if he wants, and only for a limited period."

A further tendency communicated by testimonies of many women is the belief that they have to be very hard-working and self-reliant to keep things under control in the

home. Marcia, who mentioned that her two daughters and niece do help a great deal with housework still complained that she hardly gets any time to relax or to join a social club:

"They are young and still have lives before them. So, I'm happy if they help. But I do most of what remains undone because I cannot force them to work [within the home]. Also, my eldest daughter in particular, is not good with people, and therefore I prefer to handle the customers myself. Otherwise they might get fed-up and that would ruin our menas of earning a living."

This study did not attempt to investigate the intra-household dynamics of households with two spouses, or of those headed by males. However, most women who were interviewed had one or more male household members living with them. The impression I got was that males in these households did much less housework than women. But, more significantly, I found that many of the respondents had actually internalised the traditional gender roles within the home, and expected their daughters or female relatives to perform more housework than males. The testimony of Thandi Tyawa (discussed in chapter 7) spells out the expectation women have of their daughters compared to their sons:

"On a given day I usually cook and clean the house... The washing is one other thing which I do on a daily basis. I do the washing for my sons and my brothers... My [14 year-old] daughter does her own laundry. She also does the washing up in the evening after dinner, that is her work. She should not get used to wandering the streets. It is important to keep her busy and train her on what every woman has to know about house work."

Thandi complained that she is often overwhelmed with all the chores she has to perform on a given day, and pointed out that this is because her daughter was still attending school. This is despite the fact that there are all the unemployed [male] household members who spend whole days at home.

Another extract from a conversation I had with the respondent at the end of our first

interview is a further illustration of women's perception of gender roles within the domestic sphere:

"Me: 'Can we fix an appointment for next Wednesday at five, same time as today?'

Maureen: 'No. Can we make it a bit early. I usually have to start making dinner ready by 5.30. My nephew and I usually eat at 7.00.'

Me: 'OK, when can we make it for then? I'm open to suggestions...'

Musa: 'Mornings, I prefer mornings. But, why don't you leave it until next weekend when Dineo (daughter) will be home from boarding school? I will be having more time then, she does most of the cooking and cleaning.'

Me: 'Does this mean that Sipho (nephew) does not do any cooking?'

Musa: 'He does if he feels like it. He surprises me now and again, but I cannot count on that, you know how boys are. I am pleased that he knows how to cook and clean, for his own sake, many boys do not do any women's work, they wander the streets'"

Another concern which this study highlighted was that of classifying women's economic and non-economic activities within the home. Women generally did not recognise as economic such activities as raising vegetables for household consumption (Helen Sithebe); or cooking food for household consumption (Sheila Zwane); or doing the washing and cooking for their grown up sons (Fikile Shabangu); or rushing home to prepare dinner for a nephew (Musa Wanda). They instead explained their behaviour as either given (Zwane), necessary (Shabangu), or enjoyable (Sithebe).

In the literature focusing on the domestic labour debate, the view which advocates that domestic work should be treated as any other form of (paid) work is now established. This prevalent argument was, however, not readily supported by women's perceptions of their own positions within the home. While there was no woman who showed particular enthusiasm and preference for performing housework, their being associated

with it and doing more of it than men did not seem to be their vital area of concern.

Indeed some studies have argued that the assumption that housework and the household as such are oppressive and exploitative for women is predicated on white western feminist thinking (hooks, 1991). hooks (1991) agrees that it was sexism which initially delegated the performance of housework exclusively to women. Yet curiously, she does not vigorously question this gender inequality, and instead argues that black women worldwide have embraced their role as homemakers for their families. Making a reference to the South African situation, she argues that in white supremacist societies a home is regarded as a sanctuary where the oppressed people seek refuge against the harsh realities of the public sphere where they are discriminated against in both race and class terms. According to this view, the performance of housework and any other intra-household exploitation women are subjected to are therefore considered by women as a lesser sacrifice.

At a very broad political level, this view does have some plausibility, and maybe housework is possibly more bearable compared to, say, discrimination in the public sphere such as in the work place. Yet, it does not justify the performance of more housework by women since discrimination of minority groups in the public domain affects both men and women. In fact, much evidence shows that women are more discriminated against in the public sphere than men. Therefore, the subordinate role of women within the home cannot be rationalized purely in these political terms. Besides, the women's own perception of housework as non-oppressive is very different from the exploitative element of housework for women.

This is where I think the question of choice advanced by Sen (1990) in the co-operative conflict model has great explanatory value. Women heads' seeming acceptance of their roles as homemakers may be based on their perception of a possible breakdown of household functioning had she to challenge the gender-based inequalities within the home. More fundamentally, Sen (1990) argues that the politicization of the gender issue and conscientization of women of their (subordinate) position may bring about sharp changes in their perceptions of their situation. He warns that it is erroneous to regard women's lack of perception of intra-household gender inequalities, including their association with housework, as tantamount to the absence of those inequalities.

The next section considers women's perception of their and their households' poverty and well-being. The extracts in this section, show that poverty and well-being cannot be fully understood in, and should not be assessed purely on narrow quantitative terms.

8.5: Women Heads on Poverty and Well-being

In Chapter 1 it was suggested that an underlying assumption of this study is that households headed by women are generally the poorest. This assumption was confirmed by both my observation of Orlando East households, and the literature which suggests a relationship between female-headed households and poverty. It was also shown in Chapter 4 that surveyed Orlando East households are poorer than the average low-income African urban households. Yet, while I met and spoke to women who acknowledged that they were poor, the majority saw themselves as not the worst

off, and believed that they were coping reasonably within the limited means, options and opportunities available to them. There was also a general tendency to seek to accentuate coping strategies women employ, rather than their deprivation.

Fikile Shabangu, for instance, perceived her "poverty" thus:

"I think I am poor, yes. But I do not carry those feelings with me all the time. I think I am a brave person. I try hard to survive and not give up and 'throw my hands in the air.' I have always tried and succeeded to support my children. I have never given up. In other words, yes I am poor but I am not hopeless... We have never had to go without a meal on any given day."

In a slightly different vein, Queen assessed her situation as follows:

"I cannot classify myself as poor. Not at all! God could punish me for that. We have never in this house gone to bed without something to eat. Besides, I do afford the general necessities of life... I wouldn't consider myself as poor in the true sense of the word. No."

There are various ways in which the women's perceptions communicated above could be explained. The sentiments the women convey could be explained simply on the basis of the fact that poverty is in any case a relative concept, there is always someone who is poorer than someone else even in cases of stark poverty. Probably, the perception of not being worst off is induced by the fact that those families who live in backyard shacks are materially worse-off than Orlando East residents who live in Municipal houses. The women who gave this view might have been comparing their households with their often much poorer sub-tenants. The following testimony points to this possibility:

"I do classify myself as poor, yes... I do not have any money to save or to buy all the things I need. But then again most people are very poor in Soweto, especially women because they are the ones experiencing more unemployment. Even if they are employed they earn very little compared to men." (Helen Sithebe)

Another possibility is that the women were gauging their coping strategies and their well-being against what they consider as realistically possible for poor people to aspire for. Poor people are often used to poverty and suffering and may have despaired of the possibilities for further improvement of their households' well-being, and may have then lowered their expectations and aspirations accordingly (Sen , 1990). In the case of Orlando East respondents an aspect of diminished expectations is indicated by a usual response of measuring the absence of acute poverty by the household head's ability to provide food for the household.

Others, as the two following extracts indicate, viewed their lack of poverty not purely in terms of material well-being, but believed that they were better able to plan their finances as unpartnered women. Helen (widowed) told me her view of the position of women she knew in Orlando:

"I find that women with husbands are sometimes more disorganised [financially] because they cannot plan independently. They sometimes leave the planning of finances to their husbands. But, often husbands do not know how to plan for the household. They do not know how to use the money if it is not enough for all household needs. Women are better with this... Sometimes men use the money as they please... I may be poorer without a husband, but I'm able to plan my limited resources as I see fit."

Another respondent, Marcia (separated from her husband) admitted that she was materially worse off than when her husband used to live with them. Yet, for her, the non-economic benefits of being single were huge:

"I am doing all the things I ever wanted to do. I have more friends and I enjoy the commitments [i.e. positions] I have in church. I do as I please, and I'm no longer bitter towards my husband."

The same view was succinctly communicated by another woman (Agnes Manzini,

divorced):

"I do not mind the [lack of] money. We were never rich anyway, rich people do not live in Orlando... At least I no longer live like a bird not knowing what might happen next [referring to her ex-husband's bouts of violence]"

This sense of freedom and self-determination was common among divorced women in particular, including those who admitted to being worse-off materially since the divorce or separation.

The above two extracts tell us less about the material deprivation and poverty of women and their households, than they reveal about the perceived state of fulfilment in being in control of one's life and of having the space to make choices and take control of the household budget, a characteristic which many women regard as lacking in situations of partnership with men. However, a fundamental question then arises as to the usefulness of perception and attitudinal studies, if they do not confirm the poverty which our measurements point to.

It is argued here that the women's perceptions of well-being are of fundamental importance because it is such perceptions which shape the functioning of the household and unwittingly sustain the practices which are exploitative of women. Furthermore, these perceptions have a major impact on the outcomes of policy directed at women. Seeking women's perceptions on issues of poverty and well-being is therefore only useful if those perceptions are going to be used to challenge internalised attitudes which sustain women's marginalisation, by pointing out to them the possibilities which they hitherto considered as unachievable.

8.6. Summary of Chapter Eight

The main aim of Chapter 8 was to convey women's perceptions on various aspects of survival strategies which were discussed throughout the thesis. The chapter also sought to assess how women view the association of their households with poverty, and what they regarded as well-being. The oral material discussed in this chapter should be regarded as complementing the findings which were discussed in the previous chapters. This does not mean that these extracts are of no explanatory value in themselves, indeed they are fundamental in that they re-vitalise the issues already raised by theory and elaborated through the findings of the questionnaire survey.

As the questionnaire survey data indicated, incompatible priorities on spending between women and men and general financial mismanagement on the part of men were perceived to be central to the breakdown of household functioning which leads to either divorce or separation, or to women's unenthusiastic attitude towards marriage. Many studies both in and outside South Africa confirm this view (e.g. van der Vliet, 1984; Burman and Fuchs, 1986; Chant, 1985; Stichter, 1988). What is perhaps a less prevalent view is that while not all women opt for singleness as an economic survival strategy, they generally view themselves as coping better as single women than they did when they lived with partners. The general perception of coping better is not always viewed by women purely in economic terms, as they generally assess their improved status in non-economic symbolic terms as well, such as self-determination, control of resources, lack of fear and uncertainty, etc.

It was confirmed by women's testimonies that extended family members are not taken

on by women heads purely or mainly for economic betterment of the household. It seems that the traditional African beliefs that the family is not merely the mother and her children, persists in cities as women take on extra responsibility for extended members, who are either related or not by kin, as part of their obligations. This is also confirmed by a number of studies on African social systems which have been cited in this thesis. Risking subjectivity, I can also confirm that I cannot remember a time in my grandparents' house when we lived as a nuclear household for any length of time. There was always one or two people, not always blood relatives, who would come to stay, for free, for extended periods of time because they either had no home or no job.

With a few exceptions, women viewed non-market transfers both as an indispensable survival strategy, as well as a means of socialising with other women. The club meetings and socials were the only form of relaxation by women from the grind of household work and earning a living.

With regard to housework, women's views showed that they consider housework as their domain. They indicated to have internalised the ideology which associates them and other female members of the household with household chores. The performance of house work was not at all viewed as an economic activity by the women. The view which explains the exploitation of women within the home in purely political terms (hooks, 1991) was challenged. It was pointed out that while this view has some plausibility it does not explain the intra-household subjugation of women's rather than of men's needs. It was suggested that Sen's co-operative conflict model is more

appropriate in explaining women's seeming willingness to perform more work and their tendency to subordinate their needs.

Women's views did not support the findings which regard their households as the poorest. While some women admitted poverty, they thought that they were not doing too badly because they could put food on the table. They also thought that poverty was not simply the condition of headship, since the majority of households were poor in any case. They accentuated their relative freedom to juggle tight budgets compared to women who had partners. It was suggested that women might have lowered their expectations of well-being to what they thought was achievable. It was concluded that the women's views in this regard tell us less about their material conditions, as they generally tended to accentuate their survival strategies.

The main lesson arising from women's oral testimonies is that the women's subjective views are not always in agreement with what quantitative surveys reveal. It was concluded that these perceptions are fundamental however because they reveal how the marginalised groups, in this case women, may internalise their deprivation and thereby unwittingly perpetuate it.

The next final chapter pulls together the study findings and make policy and research recommendations arising from these findings.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSIONS, POLICY AND RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

9.0. Introduction

The overall aim of the study was to determine the various aspects of economic survival strategies of female-headed households in Orlando East. In the literature female-headed households have mostly been portrayed as the poorest of the poor. This conceptualisation proved to be accurate for many of the households which were surveyed in Orlando East. This study sought to determine how the poorest households dealt with their situation of material deprivation on a day-to-day basis. One of the main emphases of this study was on seeking women heads' own perceptions of their roles and status in the home and neighbourhood. Instead of seeking to assess only the levels of poverty of households headed by women, the study also sought to emphasise their survival strategies.

The study specifically chose to concentrate on those households whose heads were not in formal employment. This is because in South Africa women in the formal labour market have been studied relatively better than "unemployed" women. This is probably because of the former's association with the trade unions and the interest generated by these in academic, economic and political debates.

Chapter One outlined the motivation and rationale for the study and discussed the research methods employed, with a particular emphasis on the challenges and

opportunities of oral history collection. The strength of the findings of this study lies in its use of the life history techniques.

Chapter Two examined the articulation of race and class in shaping gender relations. It was argued that because of their distinct class positions white and black women's experiences of gender oppression were qualitatively different. The impact of colonialism in transforming gender relations in Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as current factors influencing these were investigated. The conceptual debates surrounding the household, household headship and survival strategies were also reviewed.

Chapter Three gave a brief overview of the socio-economic and political processes in South Africa. It also attempted to explain the socio-economic and the historical and current political juxtaposition of Soweto, the study area, with Johannesburg, its industrial city, and South Africa's economic heartland.

Chapter Four, the first of the findings chapters, looked into the economic well-being of female-headed households in Orlando East. It investigated such issues as the causes, scale and prevalence of female-headed households, the income and expenditure patterns and how these are affected by the dependency ratios in these households.

Chapters Five to Seven concentrated on three major themes relating to survival strategies of women at the household level. Chapter Five investigated the role of non-market exchanges between households. Chapter Six examined the relationship between household survival and changes in household structure; and Chapter Seven looked into

factors affecting women's usage of time within households and the ideological and socio-economic processes influencing women's role within the home. Lastly, Chapter Eight discussed women's perceptions regarding the themes discussed in the previous chapters.

The aim of this final chapter is to draw attention to the major findings and conclusions of the study. These will be discussed in the light of the study's hypotheses and original objectives, and accompanying research questions, as well as the current debates on gender and development, household economics and household survival strategies. The chapter will also assess the policy implications of the study, and make suggestions for future gender-sensitive policy-oriented research.

9.1. Major Findings of the Study

The study showed that the association of female-headed households with poverty is not unfounded because, in varying degrees, surveyed households in Orlando East were, by all standards, very poor. The overall feeling however was that despite being very poor these women enjoyed relative freedom to determine their lives and many indicated that they had space to decide how to ration the scarce resources of their households. It was observed that some informally employed women heads did not consider their households as necessarily always worse-off than those of their counterparts who were formally employed. What put them at a disadvantage was the *unpredictability* of their income, as well as the fact that they had to combine a variety of activities to raise such incomes. The women interviewed for this study were therefore generally more vulnerable because their incomes were largely insecure.

If Chambers' (1989) stance (discussed in Chapter 2) that poverty is not only about material want, but also about *insecurity* and powerlessness is accepted, it can be said that female heads are poorer than male heads, and informally employed female heads are the poorest of all women because of their high degree of insecurity.

Because of the high levels of unemployment among both men and women, male partners were generally no longer seen as a form of insurance against protracted poverty. Instead, the inability of men to provide for household sustenance coupled with the unreasonable spending priorities of men, were found to be central in explaining the widespread breakdown of marital relations in Soweto. In a community where the bulk of households, irrespective of the gender of the head, are poor in any case, the ability to provide for the sustenance of the household becomes a paramount factor determining the nature and sustainability of male-female relations. Women faced with poverty, coupled with the stress of a bad marriage or an unrewarding relationship tended to opt out and sought the freedom to garner income by any means possible. In fewer cases men were reported to have walked out of their families in search of "greener pastures" with other "wealthy" women. A strong link between economic instability within the home and family breakdown, suggested by other studies is therefore indicated by the findings of the present study.

While all women who were interviewed made their income through a combination of more than one informal means, most activities were concentrated in the very small-scale "survivalist" end of the sector. The relegation of women to the least profitable end of the sector has been explained by some researchers as a result of the rise in

formal unemployment which has seen many men joining the informal sector, and monopolising the most productive activities within it (Rogerson, 1994). In Soweto for example, the *shebeens* in the 1960's and 1970's were operated almost exclusively by women who were successful and enterprising *shebeen* "queens". Yet since the liberalization of the liquor trade, men have entered this sector and women have largely been relegated to very small and less profitable *shebeens*. Despite being better-off than non-*shebeen* informal sector operators, most women who operated *shebeens* in Orlando East made only modest incomes compared to tavern-style liquor outlets which are now run almost exclusively by men in Soweto.

The study also established that security of home ownership, more than women's level of formal education, determined the level of success of their informal income generating activities. While the education levels of women varied widely, none of them had post-secondary formal education. Rather, the nature and success of their informal generating efforts seemed to be determined by a combination of factors such as the right to space in which they could operate a business (e.g. home ownership or renting from the Municipality), the existing social networks, and past on-the-job training and experience. The link suggested in the literature between formal education and African women's employability was not evident among women informal sector operators in Orlando East. This finding has fundamental research, and ultimately, social policy implications with regards to training needs of women informal sector operators.

There is a consensus in gender and development literature on the importance poor

women place on inter-household networks of reciprocity (e.g. Beneria and Feldman, 1992; Pryer, 1993). These forms of informal networks between urban households on either a one-to-one level, or through a formation of community-led neighbourhood organisations were found to be commonplace in Orlando East. Many women pointed out that they would not survive without these because their incomes were insecure and unpredictable. The level of organising around survival among Orlando East women, particularly women heads, points to the need of those who work at the community level to build on women's efforts. Community level structures portray women's ability to organise around issues of common concern. I elaborate on this point later in the chapter.

Living with extended family members in one's household was not found to be a particularly useful method of augmenting household income, as has been reported by some literature (Chant, 1985; 1991; Rakodi, 1994). Despite the fact that extended household forms were found to be a norm in Soweto, only a very small percentage of Orlando East respondents reported to have at one stage considered the potential of extended members to contribute to household budgets. Other studies have indeed pointed out that in an African setting financial considerations are only one of many positive attributes of extended members (e.g. Kayongo-Male and Onyango, 1984), hence these persist even if it means a drain on household resources.

Among the few extended members who contributed financially to household budgets, distinct gender differentials were found, with females showing more tendency to contribute to household budgets than males. Their contributions were also more

reliable because they were more regular. While women extended members who had income tended to devote a bulk of it towards joint household expenditure, male extended members who had income devoted most or all of it towards acquiring status symbol items such as cars and expensive clothing. Overall, this study found that in many households the day-to-day responsibility for household provisioning still lay with the woman.

The study concludes therefore that living with extended members cannot be justified purely or principally on economic terms. In Orlando East at least, living with extra members was regarded as a pragmatic response to practical problems many of which relate to limited social mobility of people caused by lack of education, and more importantly lack of jobs, and housing problems.

On the question of women's performance of housework, this study concluded that the majority of women still did more work within the home than men. This situation was exacerbated in those households where there are adult males in residence. The status of household headship therefore did not automatically exonerate women from doing most household tasks. The concept of a revered African matriarch reported in the literature on African households was not encountered in Orlando East, as many elderly widowed mothers did the cooking, washing and ironing for their grown up sons or male relatives on a regular basis. The women themselves still associated their female offspring more with the performance of household duties, than they did their male ones.

While women juggled housework with a variety of income generation activities in any given day, it did not matter much to them that doing housework such as cooking, cleaning, washing and ironing constituted an economic activity, despite the fact that the time it took to get these tasks done meant time away from income generation activities. With a few exceptions, women regarded housework as something they have always done to keep their households organised. There are opposing views which have sought to explain the women's seeming willingness to be persistently associated with housework. It was argued that Sen's co-operative conflict model (Sen, 1990) is the most convincing because it highlights the gender conflicts which are inherent in the relationship within which housework is performed.

On a more general level, women cited social problems, such as crime, unsatisfactory state of education, lack of housing, and unemployment, as the main issues which affect them and their families. They felt that as women they had little power to influence changes in such spheres.

The women found it difficult to predict whether the new democratic government would deliver jobs and houses to poor Africans, and especially whether it would improve the position of women. While most denied any direct interest in politics, all were aware of how the hardship caused by years of discrimination against Africans, and against women in particular, was leading to breakdown of their families and other ills, mainly crime, the most pressing problem cited by all women interviewed.

9.2. Policy Implications for the Study

This study generated findings which suggest that there is a need to conceive of policies which focus directly on women as a special category. Societal ideological beliefs, and economic policies and processes have continued to discriminate against women. These have failed to take on board the heavy burdens which women now carry both within and outside households in the context of diminishing resources, a situation which has led to social disintegration and breakdown of African homes. The rise in the number of households whose sole providers are women is a result of protracted economic pressures.

In highlighting the social policy implications for urban women in South Africa, I will consider both the *context* and the *content* of policy because it is the interplay of these two factors which determines whether the policies proposed are implementable or not. Also, instead of making specific suggestions for policy, I will offer guidelines about what I consider to be practicable options given the limitations of the transitional government of South Africa.

With the political changes presently taking place in South Africa, the context of conceiving and advancing gender-aware policies has never been more conducive. The first five years of the government of national unity are crucial formative years which women and those who lobby with them should use to their advantage to draw attention to the pressing issues facing African women living in cities. An effort should be made to show that the accelerating rates of African urbanisation have meant that the roles women perform in the households and in their neighbourhoods have changed, as

women respond to problems resulting from unemployment and poverty. In particular, the specific roles played by female heads of households in low-income African townships such as Soweto should be highlighted. The women's constitution which is being discussed should seek to transform its goals into specific programmes which address the needs of different categories of women.

The content of policy targeting women in general, and low-income women in particular, should however guard against the danger of "ghettoising" women's issues by isolating these as problems which affect only women. Women's issues should be located within broader gender debates, and the implications of improvements in women's positions should be situated within the functioning of existing social institutions. In doing this however, a particular need to address not only women's practical, but also their strategic needs should be emphasised because of the present marginal position of women within and outside their households.

For example, this study showed that women are concentrated in the least profitable forms of informal sector activities, while men are increasingly taking up the more productive ventures. Social policy initiatives seeking to improve the position of women within the informal sector must take into consideration that experience has shown that women are capable of operating productive successful enterprises, but have been held back by such factors as the unavailability of capital and loans, and by household demands which compel women to combine their productive (i.e. income generating) and reproductive roles. This means that women are compelled to limit themselves to small-scale activities which they can easily combine with their

organisational tasks within the home. One practical policy response to this particular situation, is that women in their own right, whether they are *de jure* or *de facto* heads, are entitled to support grants and loans to help them kick-start their own informal enterprises. This is very crucial for the government which is struggling to generate formal employment for its under-educated female population.

Social policy initiatives should seek to build on women's efforts by enhancing the work of community structures which are already in place. With regards to Soweto, one example is that of the many forms of informal neighbourhood movements, especially women's savings and burial clubs. These are a response to needs identified by women themselves. Social policy approaches to these should be guided by what women have always aspired to, but have failed to achieve, because of a combination of structural constraints already mentioned. Social policy targeting women should not be inspired by the benevolent but often misguided conceptions of policy-makers and social planners. Development experience has shown the futility of imposing pre-conceived projects on over-stretched women (Conyers and Hill, 1987).

Above all, instead of lumping all women together, policy options should be guided by a realisation that the needs of South African women are varied. As this study confirmed, poverty and unemployment are most entrenched among Africans, and in the context of extreme poverty it is women who have to subordinate their own welfare, and provide for subsistence by any possible means. Policy-makers should therefore take into account the differential impact of policy outcomes for South African women of different population groups and social classes. Urban African

women are not a monolithic group either. The implementation of social programmes should be guided by this understanding, and ensure that the poorest women and female heads of households benefit from such programmes. The failure of development programmes to reach the poorest people they are meant to be targeting are well documented in the literature.

Naturally, the above guidelines should be informed by coherent gender-sensitive research. This study has made a contribution to existing research in South Africa, in that it has highlighted various angles from where further policy-oriented research can be approached. In the next and final section I offer some suggestions for further research arising from the study.

9.3. Suggestions for Further Research

What came out with clarity from the present study is that using the household as a unit of analysis is useful, but not adequate. There is a need to unravel intra-household dynamics to find out more about such issues as interpersonal relations, distribution of welfare and resources, and the level of joint pooling of resources within the household. While this study did not go so far as to address all these concerns fully, it certainly revealed that households are more complex internally than many surveys have been able to portray. In examining intra-household dynamics, all analyses should, of necessity, be approached along gender lines to uncover its influence on the unequal distribution of welfare within the home.

Another issue which needs to be studied further is the role played by inter-household

networks in the lives of the urban poor, and of female heads of households in particular. These forms of interdependence among households further challenge the usefulness of a view which regards the household unit as a distinct economic entity. The exchanges which take place within households operate beyond the economic principles of exchange, and therefore their economic value cannot be fully captured by studies which concern themselves only with household income and expenditure. Yet, because these are part of women's daily lives, they should form a direct focus of inquiry of studies seeking to determine women's survival strategies in cities.

Although many would feel that the urban informal sector, and the role of women within it, has been well researched in South Africa, I still maintain that many of the invisible informal sector activities, undertaken almost exclusively by women remain under-researched and invisible. These home-based activities should be studied further because they show how women have turned their reproductive roles into income-generation for their families. They also represent the hidden stress experienced by women who are believed to be unemployed and therefore idle.

A related area of research regarding the informal sector pertains to the training needs of women informal sector operators in South Africa. Given the heterogeneous nature of the informal sector, it has been suggested that individualised training based on the specific business and background of the operator is ideal (Swainson, 1992). This of course calls for more research of hidden activities of these women to determine what kind of training is appropriate to address their specific needs.

Apart from home-based economic activities, i.e. activities from which women earn their incomes, women perform the bulk of household work which is not paid and not remunerated. Gender-sensitive research should seek to determine the contribution made by invisible unpaid work to the economy. For example, this study found that some women had constant caring responsibilities of the sick and the elderly. Social policy should seek to improve the conditions within which women perform unpaid work. Therefore, well co-ordinated research is needed to steer policy in this direction.

There is a great need to co-ordinate gender research in South Africa and to make sure such research findings finally feed into social and economic policy. Some academics and activists have recently been working towards the achievement of this goal (see e.g. Bazzili, 1991), but these efforts have been undermined by a lack of co-ordination of work of all those involved, and by the (then) inaccessibility of the policy-making machinery. It is hoped that with the democratic government in place, a conducive climate has been provided to communicate and advance ideas which will improve the position of the most deprived women.

Most importantly, all those involved in gender-related work should strive to work in partnership with grassroots women's organisations and local political bodies. They should strive to present policy options arising from their research in a manner that is intelligible to women who are the focus of their research. Academic researchers in particular, are notorious for working with community structures only when they need to access data. Anecdotes of unfulfilled promises made by researchers to come back to the community to discuss and feed back the findings are common in communities

we research. If this sharing of information achieves little for the communities concerned, it can at least contribute to better-informed research.

Naturally, the research areas proposed above cannot be addressed by any one researcher. It is only through the involvement of progressive researchers who are committed to the advancement of gender equality in all fabrics of the South African society, that key research priorities can be identified. As it was argued in Chapter 2, the gender question in South Africa is both sensitive and complex because it touches on the issues of race and class. Many would not dare face these issues head on for fear of sounding divisive, especially in this age of political reconciliation when most of us want to believe that all is well.

Yet as the process of reconstruction begins in South Africa, the gender question should be put at the top of the agenda so that emerging institutions display a gender awareness. The report on the status of South African women which the Gender Working Group has prepared for the forthcoming September 1995 women's conference in Beijing is in many ways path-breaking. In particular, the Report emphasises the importance of extra-parliamentary lobbying to support the Women's Caucus in parliament in exerting pressure for change among all parties which form the Government of National Unity.

The Report also stresses the need to strengthen the information base, with key indicators disagreggated according to gender, race and class so that the present invisibility of women is not perpetuated. Such research will also provide a solid base

for the gender sensitive development policy and the monitoring of change.

9.4. Conclusion

Reflecting on my fieldwork experience, I hope I have been able to portray most of what I learnt in Orlando East. In places, women's perceptions of their world might have been distorted by the necessary intellectual discourse which I have had to impose on their stories. But the fortitude of these ordinary women has taught me so much more about their daily encounters than this thesis can successfully communicate. If, having read this thesis, the reader is left with the feeling that they understand the struggles of Orlando East women and those in similar positions in South Africa as a whole, just a little bit better, then this study will have achieved its aim.

APPENDIX 1

QUESTIONNAIRE A

PRELIMINARY QUESTIONNAIRE

(The purpose of this questionnaire is to locate the targeted 50 female-headed households. It will also give an idea of the prevalence of female household headship. Using the map of the township, every house in a street starting from the entrance to the township will be approached. Backyard squatters are regarded as households in their own right. Not all the streets will be covered)

1. Name of the Household:

2. Address of the Household:

3. Name of Household Head (optional):

   Male: Female:

4. Own Property/Renting/Squatting

5. Employed/Unemployed/Pensioned

6. Sources of Income:

   (a) Wages

   (b) Informal activities

   (c) Family Networks

   (d) Other (Specify):

7. Estimated Total Income:

8. For how long have you been living in Soweto?

9. Are you affiliated to any political or civic organisation?

10. Any comments you wish to make:

APPENDIX 2

QUESTIONNAIRE B:

HOUSEHOLD SURVEY (SEMI-STRUCTURED) QUESTIONNAIRE (for 50 households + Protea sub-sample)

1. Name of Household Head (optional):

2. Age:

3. Address of the Household

4. Occupation of Household Head:

5. Level of Education of Household Head:

6. For how long have you been unpartnered?

7. Causes of Female Household Headship:

   (a) Never married:

   (b) Separated:

   (c) Divorced:

   (d) Desertion:

   (e) Widowed:

   (f) Migratory labour:

(g) Other (specify)

8. Own Property/Renting/Squatting:

9. Dependants of Household Head:

For each dependant:

(a)Age:	(b)Sex:	(c)Occupation
i.		
ii.		
iii.		
iv.		
v.		
vi.		
vii.		
viii.		

10.Members of Extended Family Residing in the Household:

For each member of the extended family:

(a) relationship to head of household	(b) reasons for residing in the household	(c) length of time residing in the household	(d) age of the extended family member	(e)occupation of the extended family member
i.				
ii.				
iii.				
iv.				
v.				
vi.				
vii.				
viii.				

11.How much income do you command?:

(a) per week?:

(b) per month?:

12.Do you (or any other member of the household) receive any State support benefit?

Yes: No:

13.If yes, how much per month?:

14.How much contribution in terms of cash do other household members contribute to household income?

For each contributor:

(a) Who?:

(b) How much?:

(c) How often?:

15.Estimated Expenditure:

(a) per day:

(b) per week:

(c) per month:

16.How much do you spend on:

	per week?	per month?
i.food items		
ii.transport		
iii.children's pocket money		
iv.consumer durables (e.g. furniture, radio, TV, car, etc.)		
v.bills (e.g. clothing, telephone, electricity		
vi.house rental		
vii.debt repayments		
stokvels (e.g. burial societies)		
other (specify)		

17.Present Debts in Cash:

(a) taken: how much?: what for?:

(b) given: how much?: what for?:

16.Non-Market Exchanges:

From who?: How often?:

17.Leisure Time Use by the Household Head:

What Type?:

How Often?:

Costs Involved:

16.Do you own any assets?

Where? How many/much?

i.Land:

ii.House:

iii.Livestock:

iv.Other:

v.No asset ownership

17.Are you affiliated to any movement/organisation?

No:

Yes:

If yes, which one/s?

18.Is there any other thing that we did not talk about which you would like us to discuss?

APPENDIX 3

HOUSEHOLD INCOME AND EXPENDITURE: DIARY

Name of Household:

Address:

Code No:

You are requested to record all household income, however small from any source. Please remember to record incoming money daily, either as you get it, or in the evening while you still remember the amounts involved, and where you got it from. On page two, please record any money which you spend as a family.

Week Starting:..... **Week Ending:** .....

A. INCOME (money received)	Where from?	How much?
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		
TOTAL		

Week Starting: ..... **Week ending:** .....

B. EXPENDITURE (money used)	On What?	How Much?
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		
TOTAL		

APPENDIX 4

BLUE-PRINT FOR ORAL TESTIMONIES

(This is only a guideline to help keep the discussions focused, otherwise many issues which come out during the collection are allowed to take course, and testimonies are recorded on tape. The notes are taken on the spot. But taking of notes is kept to a minimum

Name of Respondent:

Address:

Questionnaire no:

1.Birth of Respondent

Date:

Place:(i) Name of Town:

(ii) Type of house:

(iii) Tenure:

(iv) Rural/Urban:

2. Parents of Respondent

Date of Birth: Mother:

Father:

Place of Birth: Mother: Father:

(i) Name of Town:

(ii) Type of House:

(iii) Tenure:

(iv) Urban/Rural:

Occupations (jobs they did/do):

3. Siblings of Respondent

Number of siblings:

Birth order in relation to the respondent:

For each sibling:

(i) Age:

(ii) Sex:

(iii) Education:

(iv) Work history:

(v) Place of Residence:

(vi) Spouses:

4.Respondent's Life History

(a) Schooling:

Type of School: i.e.mission/govt:

Level of Education:

Why she left school:

When she left school:

Does she have any post-matric training:

If yes, sources of finance:

where:

what qualification:

(b) Work History:

How many jobs have you had?

For each job:

(i) What type:

(ii) How did you find job

Career mobility:

(i) No of years in each job:

(ii) Reasons for leaving:

(iii) Detailed description of job:

Present job/occupation:

Detailed description of the present job/occupation. How did you find it? (adverts/social networks)

Union membership:

Were you ever a member of the union?

What are your expectations of your union?

(c) Household History:

What household do you live in? (yours/your parents)

Who else lives in the household?

For each occupant:

(i) Occupation

(ii) Age

(iii) Relationship to hhd

(iv) Income

When did you leave home?

Why did you leave home (e.g.marriage, bought next home, etc)

Type of house you live in:

Place (i.e.where is this house situated)

5.Offspring of Respondent

How many offspring?

For each offspring:

(i) Education

(ii) Age

(iii) Sex

(iv) Occupation

(v) Work place

(vii) Type of house

(viii)Spouse: Age:

Edn:

Job:

6. Material Lifestyle

Do you own a: house?

car?

hi-fi?

T/V set?

refridgerator?

washing machine?

other assets (specify)

7. Household survival strategies

Do you define yourself as the head of this household? Why?

For how long have you been unpartnered?

Where do children attend school?

D/oes any of your children under the age of sixteen work for renumeration?

In what ways do poor people normally earn a living?

How many meals do you/your family eat per day?

What kinds of foods do you normally eat?

Do you or your children ever go without a meal because there is none?

What kind of activities do you engage in on a given day?

8. Respondent's involvement in grassroots organisations

Do you belong to any women's or grassroots organisations?

What are the functions of these organisations

Is this organisation/movement of any potential use to you, your household, or your neighbourhood?

How do you think these could be of better value to members?

9. Respondent's Skill Level

Have you had any skills training lately?

Of what nature?

How has this affected your position?

Do you think post-school skills training is of any use to people in your position?

How?

How do you think these could be made more useful?

10. Respondent's Perception of Poverty

Do you consider yourself as poor?

Why are you poor?

Are there any households you know which are very poor in your neighbourhood?

Do needy households help one another?

How?

Do you consider yourself materially worse-off than other women who have husbands/partners?

Do you maintain that you are poorer now than you were, say, 5 years ago?

If yes, what has been the cause of this?

If no, how did your position improve? What does poverty mean to you? i.e. how does it feel like to be poor

What, in your opinion, are the major causes of poverty in Soweto?

What, in your opinion, should be done to improve the situation? By whom? Do you think the poor are in a position to help themselves? In what ways? If not, why?

APPENDIX 5

PROFILES OF ORAL HISTORY RESPONDENTS

Marcia Nkadimeng[1] (separated)

Marcia Nkadimeng was born in Orlando East in 1941. The house she presently occupies used to belong to her parents. She was brought up by her mother and has never known her father. Marcia was the second in a family of five, all of whom now have their own families. At school Marcia went up to Standard 6. She could not continue with her education because she became pregnant while still at school at the age of sixteen.

Marcia had been separated from her husband for four years at the time of the interviews. She has three daughters from a previous marriage. Her eldest daughter is married and has her own home. The other two unmarried daughters live with Marcia in Orlando East. They both have two children each. Also living in the house is Marcia's elderly aunt and a teenage niece.

Marcia has held many jobs before she became "self-employed". Her last job was with the African Children Feeding Scheme, a charity which supplies cooked meals to children attending school in poor neighbourhoods. She left this job when she got married to her present husband, who urged her to leave the job because he was going to support her. She earns a living by running a *shebeen*. Her *shebeen* is not one of the most successful ones in Orlando East, yet it has been sustained because it has its old loyal customers. This is because her mother used to be a *shebeener* as well as her grandmother before her. Marcia reported that their *shebeen* used to be very successful when there were still fewer *shebeens* in Orlando East than is presently the case. I also learnt from other Orlando East residents that this was one of most well-known and longest surviving outlets of its nature in Orlando East.

[1] All names have been changed to protect the privacy of respondents

Apart from her Orlando East home, Marcia owns a two-roomed house in White City, Jabavu, another of the poorer Soweto locations. She acquired this house when she got married to her present husband. She is currently letting the house out to generate more income for the household. She has no intention of selling her Jabavu home, because she is aware that the Orlando house she lives in is the joint family property. She is therefore keeping the other house as a safe haven in case there is a dispute between herself and her brothers over the Orlando East house. She said that acquiring the other (Jabavu) house was the only positive outcome of her marriage. Only one of her two daughters has a casual job, and she helps out with contributions to the household budget from time to time. Marcia has toyed with the idea of building back-yard shacks for sub-letting but then decided against the idea after hearing the story of a woman in Orlando West, a nearby location, who was killed by shack-dwellers after a domestic dispute.

Marcia reported that she is materially worse-off since her husband left. She has devoted her life to the church projects where she is very active. She wished her husband could send them some money even while he lived away from home with his mistress. She is disillusioned with marriage, but still thinks that her daughters could have a go at it, because they may be "luckier" than she has been. She did not have any intention to divorce her estranged husband because she hopes to inherit his money and property when he dies. She feels entitled to it. Her husband is currently a nationally acclaimed *mbaqanga* musician and composer.

Fikile Shabangu (widow)

Fikile Shabangu was born in Standerton to the south of Johannesburg in 1934. Fikile was the second of twelve children, of which only four survived into adulthood. Her father, a furniture shop clerk, died when they were still young, while her mother who worked as a washerwoman still survives. Her two brothers are married and they have homes in other parts of Soweto. Her youngest sister never married and lives with their mother in another part of Orlando East, known as Mlamlankunzi. Fikile came to Soweto in 1948 with her siblings after her parents, who had already been working in central Johannesburg for some time, acquired a municipal house in Orlando East. At

the age of twenty she married her (now late) husband and they got a house in Orlando East. In their marriage they had eight children, of whom seven survive.

Fikile went up to standard six at school because after her father died she had to leave school and find a job to help out with the education of her younger brothers and sister. Fikile lives with six of her seven children and three grandchildren. Her eldest daughter is married and lives in Diepkloof, a location which is part of Greater Soweto. At the time of the interview no one was employed in their household. Two of her daughters, who get occasional jobs from time to time at a local supermarket, were said to have been without any earnings for two months. The rest of her children are still of school-going age.

Fikile worked as a domestic servant for most of her adult life. Her last employer for whom she had worked for ten years had recently left South Africa for Portugal after her (employer's) husband died. This employer helped to secure the purchase of her home from Soweto Council before she left South Africa. She has also been sending Fikile R200.00 (£40.00) every month since she terminated her employment, an unusual deed among white domestic employers in South Africa.

Fikile has been unemployed for the past seven years and she earns her living by selling beers and soft drinks on a take-away basis. She is displeased with the fact that they have had to resort to selling beers because of destitution. She finds this to be at variance with her standing in church. But then again, she considers this to be one of the quickest way of making money in Soweto. She consoled herself by the fact that the customers did not have to consume alcohol on the premises.

She reported that theirs is a very closely-knit extended family. Her youngest sister in particular, is often very helpful with providing foodstuffs as well as with meeting some expenses towards the education of Fikile's school-going children. Her sister is in full-time employment at CNA, the newsagent in central Johannesburg, and she does not have any children of her own.

With regard to marriage, Fikile regards herself as still very traditional in her outlook as she believes that her daughters should get married. She believes that the younger generation fail to make their marriages work because they are often very intolerant of one another. She thinks women in particular are becoming less tolerant because they have better educational opportunities than in the past, and therefore better prospects for well paying jobs.

This tendency to emphasise the economic aspects of marriage was found to be common among respondents and the community in general.

Musa Wanda (divorcee)

Musa Wanda, a forty-two year old divorcee, was born in 1952 in Orlando East. Musa was one of four children in her family. All her siblings are still surviving. Her parents are both deceased. Musa's father was a professional carpenter, and her mother a secretary in a legal firm in Johannesburg. They were brought up by her mother because their father died much earlier when they were still young. Her two brothers who are both divorced live in Orlando East, and the youngest one lives and works in Witbank, to the south of Johannesburg, where their family originally came from, and where they still have relatives.

Musa occupies a converted two-roomed house with her nephew. Her two daughters aged nineteen and nine were both attending a boarding school in Swaziland at the time of the interviews. She acquired the house in 1979 after her divorce from her husband in 1976. She reported that she provides for both her daughters and her nephew because her ex-husband, a clerk at Rand Mines Properties, stopped contributing towards the upbringing of their (elder) daughter many years ago. Musa is generally very bitter, and she expressed negative feelings against her ex-husband and against men and marriage. She also reported that the father of her younger daughter never contributed towards her upbringing either.

Musa went up to Standard Ten at school, and is therefore one of the most educated women I came into contact with in Orlando East. She feels that had she not became

pregnant in her final year at high school she could have acquired a better education. At the time when she wrote her leaving examination she was already pregnant, and immediately afterwards she got married. She blames her present economic position on her early marriage, as it robbed her of a chance to acquire a better education. She also feels that she did not have enough time to get to know her partner better before getting married.

Musa has held various jobs in the past, and she still regarded herself as only temporarily unemployed and was looking for a job and attending job-related interviews when I met her. She has worked as a clerk, in the media, and mostly as a commercial van driver. She says she would prefer another driving job as she hates working in the office. She believes that the difficulty she has in securing employment is due to the fact that she is a woman looking for work in spheres which are regarded as men's jobs. Musa presently earns a living by selling soft-goods, i.e. women's wear, which she buys from the factory and then sells at a profit. She does get occasional job offers from a florist shop where she used to work as a delivery van driver. She is pleased that her elder daughter is receiving a bursary and she does not have to worry about her educational expenses.

Musa was one of a very few women who felt that the value of informal networks and social inter-dependence among the poor in the townships is exaggerated and romanticised. She asserts that the best way to get by is by being self-reliant, and to not always expect help from neighbours and friends. She holds a similar attitude towards extended family ties. She feels that her own family did not help her when she had problems, and they only come round if they are desperate.

She values her independence as an unmarried woman and says she cannot trust men because her subsequent relationships after her divorce all ended disastrously, as men very often shy away from responsibility. Her last boyfriend was said to have also been extremely violent and an alcoholic.

At a general level she feels that women need more support from the state which

should open up more job opportunities in the informal and the formal sectors.

My impression of Musa was that she was somewhat materially better off than many Orlando East women. Assessing the contents of her house as well as her lifestyle, I thought it possible that she was not declaring all her income. For instance, she was one of the only two respondents who owned cars. Her cynical attitude towards informal networks possibly emanated from the fact that she was certainly better off than most.

Helen Sithebe (widow)

Helen, a widow, was about sixty years old at the time the interviews took place. Her husband died in 1975. Helen was the fifth in a family of seven. She was born in Pietermaritzburg in the Natal midlands. The family moved to Johannesburg in 1944 after her father died and her mother came to Johannesburg to seek employment.

Helen went up to Standard Seven at school. She left school partly because at a time when she grew up standard seven was generally considered to be sufficient education for girls, and also because there was no money in the family in the years following the death of her father. She has held a number of menial and domestic jobs. For most of her working life she and her husband lived in the servants' quarters in the property of their employers. In the meantime they farmed out their children to relatives, especially to her younger sister, who is now deceased. She only acquired her Council house after the death of her husband. She occupies the house with her three daughters and granddaughters. Each of the two elder daughters has two children, and the youngest daughter still attends school at the local Orlando East High.

She earns a living by buying and selling delicacies on the street corner, mainly to school children. She also sells from home. She raises vegetables for consumption at home. She usually never sells her vegetables, but gives them to neighbours and friends if they need some. She has applied for an old age pension, but was not yet receiving it at the time when these interviews took place. One of her two daughters is employed as a cleaner at a local Orlando East municipal office and she helps with household

budget contributions from time to time. The second one gets piece-rate work occasionally, and she is the one specifically responsible for family contributions towards two burial societies.

Helen believes that young people (couples) should respect each other more and she strongly believes in the institution of marriage, regretting that none of her daughters are married yet.

Generally, she feels that there is no hope for women with little education as they are trapped in poverty. She hopes, like many women I talked to, that the new government will reverse the situation, and provide more training opportunities, more jobs, and housing for the poorest families which are more often headed by women.

Annah Nsele (divorcee)

Annah was born on January 1, 1934 in a place called Matiwane Skop in Ladysmith, Natal. She and her six siblings were brought up by their father and members of their extended family because their mother died when she was still very young. She was the youngest in her family. Annah never knew her mother as she died giving birth to a child who was to come after her. Only two of her siblings are still surviving. They both live in Natal with their families. Therefore, in and around Johannesburg Annah does not have any extended family.

At school Anna went up to standard five. She reports that she could not continue her education because when her elder sisters all got married her father expected her to take on responsibility for the household work, as she was the only woman remaining in her family at the time. On leaving school she never trained for any job. After the death of her father in the late 1950s she came to Johannesburg to seek employment.

Annah was not employed, and was receiving disability pension when I met her. She reported to have held many jobs in her lifetime, most of which were domestic ones. Her last job was with the Johannesburg Hospital where she worked as a cleaner for fifteen years. She left the job in 1979 when she fell ill suffering from sore feet. The

hospital social workers helped to secure a disability pension for her which she has been receiving since 1981.

When she met her ex-husband in 1963 she already had two illegitimate children, and they had four children in their marriage. They divorced in 1980 and she was awarded their (rented) home in the divorce settlement. Three of her oldest children, all daughters, are married, and Annah occupies her municipal house with her three remaining children, two sons and a daughter, as well as a granddaughter. Her ex-husband lives in Mzimhlophe, another part of Soweto, with his extended family. They do not keep in touch regularly, unless there is an event involving the children such as *lobola*[2] payments and weddings.

Apart from receiving a disability allowance, Annah earns her living by selling fruits and vegetables. Her son who works at OK Bazaars in central Johannesburg, contributes to the household budget occasionally, or he brings home some groceries. Also, one of Annah's married daughters, whose child lives with Annah, makes regular contributions either of cash or groceries. Annah's ex-husband used to contribute towards the education of their two youngest children for a few years after their divorce, but then he soon stopped, in contravention of the court order. Annah never bothered to follow him up for fear of causing hostilities between herself and her husband. She has since supported her family on her own.

She reports that they divorced because of her husband's excessive drinking and unwillingness to contribute towards the upbringing of their minor children. Annah came across as an extremely religious and spiritual person. She has dedicated her life to church activities, and defines herself as a "born again" Christian. Though she had been attending church occasionally before parting with her husband, she became very active after her divorce because she says church provides a diversion for her from day-to-day problems.

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[2] *Lobola* is the bridewealth paid by the prospective husband to the family of the bride. Traditionally payment was in the form of livestock, but now it is usually in the form of cash.

Annah is a member of a church-aligned burial society. This society has other functions as well. The members meet every second Saturday of the month to discuss issues ranging from home management to parental skills. They also act as a prayer group and occasionally visit the sick and the elderly who cannot come to church regularly. Annah says that the women's club has helped her integrate with other women and shake off the stigma usually attached to being divorced, a problem she associates more with younger couples.

Annah is ambivalent about the status of a single woman, describing herself as very conservative. Despite reporting that divorce for her did not mean a lot of difference in economic terms, because her husband was "tight" with his money in any case, she still believes that those women who are in positions to keep their marriages forever are very lucky. She would have preferred to remain married herself, as she thinks marriage affords women "more dignity." She advises her married daughters to respect and obey their husbands, as she definitely believes that there is some stigma attached to being a single woman, unless one is a widow.

Thandi Munyai (not married)

Thandi Munyai is the oldest in a family of five. She is forty-four years old, and has two children aged twenty and twelve years old. The house Thandi resides in used to belong to her late parents. She occupies the house with her children, her three sisters and a brother, as well as three nephews. At the time of the interviews however, their brother who is the youngest, was serving a jail sentence for his part in an armed robbery.

Their father died long ago, and her mother died more recently in 1990. She has since taken over most responsibility of decision making in the household. Thandi went up to standard five at school. She has worked in the past as an assistant in a supermarket chain, and also worked for a firm which has cleaning contracts in Johannesburg business district. She reported to have been unemployed for the past three years, since she was made redundant with a lot of other workers.

Thandi earns her living by selling soft drinks on a take-away basis. She also said that from time to time she travels to Venda in the eastern Transvaal to sell soft goods, which she buys from a wholesale outlet in Johannesburg. She usually spends several days in Venda while she sells and collects some money owed to her from previous sales. The family has relatives in Tohoyandou, the capital of the ex-Venda homeland, with whom Thandi stays whilst she is trading. Besides her income, their youngest sister, who is a shop assistant in northern Johannesburg makes regular contributions to the household budget, and she also helps to pay for the two burial societies in which the family has membership.

Thandi does not hope to get married because she thinks she is too old to change her lifestyle to accommodate marriage. However, she reported that she never planned to remain single. She says neither of the fathers of her two children offered to marry her, and the years just passed by. She therefore does not have any strong views against marriage, and she would have been married had the right person come along.

Thandi defines theirs as a very private and supportive family. She spends a lot of time together with her sisters. She believes that their lifestyle reflects that of her late parents who were very private and religious people. She conceded however, that she and her siblings were not practising Christians.

Agnes Manzini (divorcee)

Agnes, a fifty-year old divorcee, was born in Chesterville in Durban. She went up to standard 2 at school. She came to Johannesburg in 1964 to look for employment in the factories, and held a number of unskilled jobs "on and off" before finally stopping in 1976, when her husband advised her to start a "business" selling soft-drinks from home.

She met and married her husband in 1966, and they had been divorced for ten years at the time of the interview. They have four children ranging between 24 and 18 years of age. She told me that her ex-husband has since married again and they do not keep in touch. But her children, especially two sons visit their father from time to time.

The house which Agnes occupies with her children was bought by her ex-husband before they separated. They were supposed to have sold the house and divided the proceeds between the two of them after the divorce, but her husband decided that Agnes should keep the house because she was going to remain with the children. Agnes shares the (two-roomed, converted) house with her four children, daughter-in-law, i.e. son's common-law wife, and three grandchildren. There is also a two-roomed back-yard shack where the two sons sleep.

Agnes earns her living by selling soft-drinks on a take-away basis. She told me she used to sell beers and spirits as well, but she decided to stop because she is trying to give up drink. There is no other person who is employed in the home. She said her son brings some money only occasionally. Her ex-husband does help with money from time to time if one of the children has asked for it. Agnes concedes that she is materially worse off after her divorce, but she is relieved that they separated because their marital problems and her husband's violent outbursts were affecting their children negatively.

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APPENDIX 6

1. Definition of Concepts

The household: refers to a common unit of social organisation combining both shared residence and shared reproduction, such as cooking and eating, and sharing of domestic activities. In this study the emphasis is put on the day-to-day functioning of the household. Therefore, those members who do not reside in the household have not been regarded as members.

The family: in this study the term "household" is preferred to the term "family". However, where the term family has been used it has been used interchangeably with the term "household". It is acknowledged, however, that in the literature these two terms are quite distinct from each other. The family would normally refer to membership based on kin. The use of the family and the household interchangeably here reflects the fluidity with which the *researched community*, and other Africans, use these terms.

The clan: refers to a group of individuals whose members lay claim to a common ancestor. The definition of the household would be applicable to fairly urbanised communities which have very weak or no rural ties, like second or third generation urban migrants. This definition will certainly not apply to rural communities, whose "heads" or other members are away working in cities on a long-term basis, while they contribute regularly towards household sustenance, and continue to make key household decisions.

Essentialism: as used in this study refers to the tendency of some writers to conceptualise of households as *either* extended *or* nuclear. It is suggested that households can at one stage be nuclear, and at another be extended, depending on a variety of factors, for example, the stage of the life-cycle which the household is in.

Production: is used to refer to all those activities geared at generating income.

Reproduction: in the context of this thesis refers to all those activities geared at the physical

nurturing of household members, such as the organisation of the household, distribution of consumption resources, performance of household chores, and those tasks aimed at the socialization of the young. As it has been pointed out in the thesis, in practice, it is not always easy to differentiate between productive and reproductive roles, because, as in the case of many household heads I came into contact with, some of the traditionally reproductive tasks such as cooking and brewing have been turned into productive (income generation) activities. Brydon and Chant (1989) have referred to social reproduction as the imparting and maintenance of ideological conditions necessary for sustaining class relations and upholding the economic and social status quo, while Simon (1992, p.36) views social reproduction as "both the short term *maintenance* and long term *renewal* of society and its constituent classes" (his italics).

Divorced: refers to those women who are single because their marriage has been legally ended.

Separated: refers to those married women whose separation from their partners has not involved any legal procedures. In this case while the spouses live apart, they are legally still regarded as married. In this study common-law unions have not been regarded as marriages, and therefore women categorised as either separated or divorced are those who would have been married at some stage in their lives.

Class: This term has been used cautiously in the thesis, since I am still wary of classifying Africans in class terms. This is because the overwhelming majority of Africans belong to a working class. Instead, there has been a (justifiable) tendency in South Africa to use race as a proxy for class. As I have pointed out in the thesis, there has for some time now been an emergent African capital owning bourgeoisie, whom until very recently, could not be referred to as a class because their (bourgeoisie) status did not give them access to social and political power. Therefore, until after the democratic elections last year, 1994, I would argue that it was fairly pointless to differentiate Africans in class terms because even those who lived on profit and rent lacked the fundamental privileges of the "owning" class.

2. An additional note on the methodology

In order to find potential respondents, systematic random sampling was done. Orlando East was divided into three sections following the phases in which it was erected. Each phase was more or less equally covered. In each phase I started interviewing in the first house of the first street. This "first" street was clearly identifiable due to the way the townships were planned. Once the street was chosen, all houses in that particular street were approached. I would then skip one, two, or three streets, and then follow the same procedure (i.e. approaching every household once the street has been picked). In each of the three phases I stopped once I had come up with fifty potential sample members whose characteristics more or less fitted my sample frame. On carefully sifting through this group of 150, only 113 were deemed truly suitable on every criterion (as set out in page 15 of the thesis). Out of this group (of 113) 50 women were chosen for the main sample through simple random sampling. Simple random sampling was done by numbering all the 113 households (from number 1 to 113). The numbers were then mixed in a box, and the fifty households which were picked out formed part of the study.

I decided on 50 households because I considered this to be a large enough size for the findings to be representative, and also taking into account the advice of my supervisor, my workshop participants and local researchers. Although a larger number would have been more representative, I settled for 50 because of the time frame and resource limitations I faced. The twenty oral history respondents drawn from the main sample were the largest number I could manage to interview thoroughly in the time I had available.

The tapes were used in the live interviews so that I could review the interview process, because there are limitations to what can be captured through written responses. Most women were not bothered by my use of a tape-recorder because the purpose of the study was clearly explained in the beginning, and it was agreed that respondents' identities would be withheld. With a few women who were bothered in the beginning, a tape-recorder was only used in the subsequent visits/interviews when the relationship with the researcher was a more trusting one. In all respects, a tape-recorder was used with full approval of respondents.

It was sometimes difficult to get income/expenditure data partly because people are generally

reluctant to discuss money matters, especially if the rapport with the researcher is not yet well established. Another reason was that because of the inconsistency and unpredictability of their income many women could not easily estimate their income and expenditure. None of the women requested to fill in diaries refused to do so. While some appeared bothered by the task of keeping diaries, they agreed to give it a try nevertheless. In those households where the head herself was not very keen on keeping a diary because of other responsibilities, I would request another household member, usually a school-going child, to fill in the diary for me. It also helped that I monitored the filling in of diaries on a daily basis, and gave guidance where necessary. It was pleasing that in the end many of the women who kept diaries, found this to have been a worthy exercise.

I was able to distinguish between different categories of respondents (i.e. divorced from separated) because I specifically inquired about the status of the union prior to divorce or separation.

3. A Brief note on the Structure of the Apartheid City

The purpose of the discussion which follows is to trace the processes which have influenced the present structure of the South African city. Three main phases can be identified in the development of urban policy and practice in South Africa (Davies, 1981; Lemon, 1991). The first period which can be termed the settler-colonial period lasted from the beginning of white settlement in South Africa in 1652 until the early years of the Union in 1910. The second period was marked by the Native (Urban Areas) Act of 1923 which entailed the conscious pursuit of urban segregation. The Group Areas Act of 1950 marks what can be regarded as the third phase in the development of urban policy, and it entailed more rigid and far-reaching policies of urban apartheid from 1950's onwards.

This brief discussion is going to be divided into five sections. The first three sections will be the discussion of the three phases mentioned above. The fourth section will examine how the South African state sought to modernise (rather than transform) urban apartheid policies. The emphasis will be placed on the period starting from the late 1970's to the 1980's, a period which was characterised by a spate of half hearted policy measures to redress the inequities in the apartheid city. The fifth and final section will seek to show that despite the fact that formal apartheid ended in 1991 in legal terms, the transition is slow, and the apartheid legacy is still very much evident in the apartheid city in socio-economic terms.

(i) The Colonial City: Early Urbanisation and Control

The initial colonial contact between Europe and South Africa dates back to 1652 when the first Dutch settlers established their colony in the Cape. The colony grew steadily through consistent immigration and slave trade. British colonial rule in the Cape and Natal later ensued. As already mentioned, the colonial phase lasted up to 1910 when the Union of South Africa was formed, after the Afrikaners were conquered in the Anglo-Boer War. The features of the settler-colonial city were that of dominance and dependency between the indigenous people and their colonisers. Forces of control which were meant to control the access of colonised groups to political power, the means of production, land ownership and space through segregation were systematically put into place.

The early colonial settler economies of South Africa were pre-capitalist and depended on

subsistence activities. These were later to be transformed into capitalist exchange mechanisms. By 1870 external investment and economic expansion, and urban-oriented commercial activities had already taken shape (Davies, 1981). The discovery of minerals in Kimberley in 1869 and on the Reef in 1886 meant widespread urbanisation and the later growth of the manufacturing sector.

The accompanying and subsequent division of land between the Boer and British settlers meant progressive dispossession of Africans of their primary means of production, the land. This, and other measures, forced the Africans to join the labour market as wage workers. The 1913 Land Act allocated a mere 7% of the total land area for African ownership. In the meantime, the imposition of taxes, the development of migratory labour, and other regulatory measures meant that more and more Africans were induced to seek paid employment. Where it proved difficult to induce Africans to enter the labour market, Indian migrant labour was imported, especially between 1860 and 1911. This group of indentured Indian labour in Natal later dispersed to the Cape and Transvaal. The Indians were subjected to exploitative labour practices, but some were better off than Africans in that they participated in the competitive market as either landowners or traders. The competition between Indians and Whites in trade and urban land ownership led to attempts by the colonial government to control the Indian's economic development.

What should be mentioned about the agreement reached between the Afrikaner Republic and the British colonies at the formation of the Union was that it represented reconciliation between whites only. It had no specific guidelines with regards to housing and general urbanisation of Africans, as well as that of Coloureds and Indians. No consolidated state control was exercised over the urbanisation of Africans before 1923, and instead piecemeal and disjointed legislation was introduced to control the movement of Africans, Indians and Coloureds. This lack of planning was more evident in the failure of administrations of major cities to develop any comprehensive policies for housing Africans (Kagan, 1978; Lemon, 1991). This situation led to inevitable health hazards in areas which had developed into slums. It was partially White fears of contagious diseases which galvanised the city administrations of the time into action, and gave impetus to the development of racially segregated locations. For example, the establishment of locations in Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and Johannesburg

was precipitated by an effort to counter the spread of bubonic plague (Lemon, 1991). The following section considers the development of the second phase of the apartheid city: the segregated city.

(ii) The Segregated City: 1923-1950

The growth of the manufacturing sector coupled with deteriorating livelihoods in the reserves led to a dramatic influx of Africans to the urban areas in the years preceding World War II. State intervention to regulate the influx of Africans started in 1923. The Urban Areas Act of 1923 empowered local authorities to set aside land for African occupation in separate locations, to accommodate Africans living in towns, or to require their employers to do so, and to implement a system of influx control. Under the Act, municipalities were expected to keep revenue accounts for Africans, and the revenue accruing from fines, rents and beer-hall profits could be spent on the upgrading of the location. The Act also sought to control all forms of brewing and trade in the locations (Lewis, 1969). Davies (1981) has, however, pointed out that the segregated city differed somewhat from the apartheid city in the level of flexibility of legislative measures which were put in place to control the influx of Africans to cities.

He asserts that these legal controls were incomplete, differentially applied and permissive in nature. As a result, with increased industrialisation in the mid-1930's, this permissiveness and flexibility in planning meant that points of racial contact increased.

In his model of the segregation city, Davies (1981) has sought to portray the structure of the South African city before apartheid planning was formalised. In Davies' model Whites occupied the land strategically located close to the economic, social and political centres of the city. The model shows a core CBD under the control of Whites, and also includes the Indian CBD frame on the margins of the white business district. In this model, Whites occupy most of the residential space which is differentiated in terms of income groups. The houses of low income whites are situated closer to the industrial area, and the same applies to African areas. The compounds for African workers are situated in the industrial sector. The residential areas for Indians and Coloureds are on the periphery, but a few are situated in the inner city, just beside the CBD frame. What is significant in Davies' model is the way he

depicts the zones of racial mixing, a feature which was later to disappear at the onset of apartheid.

The 1940's saw a rapid change in urban policy in South Africa. The rapid growth of the industrial and manufacturing sectors increased labour demands, which in turn fuelled the influx of semi-skilled Africans to the cities. This happened within the context of continuing reluctance by the authorities to provide more housing land for Africans. Instead the state sought to strengthen the control of influx of Africans to cities. The 1945 Native (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act introduced a set of measures to control the influx and permanency of Africans in cities. In particular, the infamous Section 10 of the Act allowed Africans to claim permanent residence in an urban area only if the person had resided in the city since birth, or had lawfully resided there for 15 years, or had worked in an urban area for the same employer continuously for 10 years. As a result of this legislation and its amendments, 100,000 arrests per annum took place between the 1960's and 1980's (Simon, 1989).

Despite this legislation, the influx of Africans to cities still continued unabated. This resulted in the widespread development of squatter settlements, and increasing fear among Whites of the uncontrollable influx of Africans to cities. During the election campaign of 1948 the Nationalist Party exploited these White fears, and unexpectedly won the elections. It was after the Nationalist Party takeover of the government, and the institutionalisation of racial segregation, that the apartheid city was truly born. The next section examines the structure of the South African city after the onset of apartheid.

(iii) The Apartheid City: 1950's to 1980's

A great mosaic of literature on African urbanisation has concentrated on this phase. The Group Areas Act of 1950 and its amendments is the legal device that enforced the imposition of planned segregation upon all racial groups and on all urban areas. The enforced group areas represented the fundamental apartheid ideology that incompatibility between ethnic groups is so great that contact between them leads to friction, and that peaceful relations between groups can only be maintained by minimising points of contact between them. Again, Davies has provided a model to capture the apartheid city in its original form. In his model an exclusively white CBD is surrounded by a vast White residential area. Coloured and Indian

residential areas, as well as African townships, are located in separate sectors. The migrant workers' hostels are no longer situated in the industrial area, but have been relocated within African townships. The features of Davies' model are the complete separation of races, and the existence of buffer zones between residential group areas. These buffer zones could be, for example, waste land, roads, railway lines, or industrial belts.

The decentralisation of residential areas added to transport costs to work on the part of Africans. But then again, the development of peripheral industrial areas at some places eased the problem of travelling, and provided employment opportunities in places within reach of blacks.

It has been argued that the Group Areas Act was only made effective after its amendment in 1957, and therefore its impact was only evident in the 1960's and 1970's. Even then, as Western (1981) shows in his study of Cape Town, the impact was not uniformly felt.

One of the major objectives of the apartheid policies of 1950's and 60's was to curb African urbanisation. Many studies have shown, however, that apartheid policies were usually *ad hoc*, sometimes achieving unintended consequences. Therefore, the perpetuation of apartheid meant that the state had to continuously adapt its policies, and revise old methods and goals in the light of unforeseen circumstances (Posel, 1991), and in many cases the state had to employ coercive measures such as forced removals, etc. (Mabin, 1991)[1]. By the late 1970's to the early 1980's many state policies meant to modernise apartheid began to indicate that the state was beginning to retreat from its grand apartheid policies (Simon, 1989). The next section briefly considers the phase preceding the total demise of urban apartheid policies.

(iv) Modernising Apartheid Policies

The late 1970's and particularly the 1980's saw a spate of half-hearted measures to reform urban apartheid amid internal political unrest, international pressure and desire to attract foreign investment. These changes were however disjointed and reactionary in nature, and in

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[1]For more discussion of the phases and processes of the apartheid city see contributions to Lemon (1991), as well as those cited in Footnote 5 page 73 in the thesis.

many cases were accompanied by repression (Simon, 1989). However, the numerous legislative measures of the 1980's did change the face of the apartheid city as it had been planned when the National Party came into power[2]. In this section I review the model originated by Simon (1989; 1992) which depicts the South African city of the 1980's.

Simon's model depicting the South African city after the repealing of the Group Areas Act and influx control is a departure from Davies' model discussed above. In Simon's model the CBD is no longer racially exclusive as Indians, Coloureds and Africans have gained business access into the city. The model also shows grey areas, i.e. inner city areas of racial mixing. The non-white residential areas are no longer uniform as African, Indian and Coloured middle-income areas are developing alongside the townships and other old residential areas. One of the significant features of the model is its portrayal of squatter settlements in previously uninhabited spaces. The squatters originated from various sources: some would be migrants, but many were former residents of backyard shacks in the established townships. The emergence of squatter settlements on urban land (rather than in nearby homelands) was clearly a significant departure from the intensely planned and controlled nature of former non-white residential areas. Although some were removed by the state, the changing nature of South African politics in the late 1980's and early 1990's meant that they increasingly became less vulnerable to draconian removals. The buffer zones, shown in the earlier model, still exist in the modernised apartheid model. It should be mentioned, however, that while the model is a fair portrayal of the post-Group Areas city, some of the features would not be applicable in certain areas.

The concluding section highlights some future prospects of the post-apartheid city.

(v) Conclusion

The 1990's saw further legislative measures which effectively put the structure of the apartheid city right in the past, at least in policy terms. However, many of these measures have not touched the daily lives of urban blacks in any significant way. After repealing a

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[2]For a full and cogent account of the legislative measures passed throughout the 1980's to reform urban apartheid, the reader is referred to Simon (1989; 1992), and other sources already cited above.

number of segregationist acts, the government tended to leave it to market forces to rectify all the distortions which were created by apartheid planning. For instance, having annulled the Group Areas Act, the Separate Amenities Act, and others, the government did not embark on any comprehensive strategy to ensure that the poor who were now legally entitled to better amenities actually got them.

The Reconstruction and Development Programme, which the new government has put together is meant to redress all the socio-economic and political inequities of the apartheid era. It is too soon to predict how successful the new government is likely to be in reversing the situation. It would seem as if great importance is being placed on the viability of local government in addressing local issues. This could be a useful approach considering the disparate socio-economic indicators and spatial dynamics of major South African cities. For instance, Johannesburg is not typical of other South African cities because of the pressures it is experiencing as the economic hub, especially its inner-city residential areas. It appears, therefore, that provincial administrations have to concentrate on strategies which best address the local conditions.

An exhaustive discussion of the factors affecting the growth and structure of the South African city is not possible in this short account. It is hoped, however, that the foregoing discussion demonstrates an awareness of some of the most significant legislation which has informed urban policy in South Africa.

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